

HEAVEN OPENED

A Book of Comfort and Hope



James M. Campbell

This book presented to the
Beulah College Library
Upland, California

by

Mrs. Isabella Scott
and
Mr. Charles Heriwood

Heaven Opened

A BOOK OF COMFORT AND HOPE

By

JAMES M. CAMPBELL, D.D.,

*Author of "Grow Old Along With Me,"
"The Presence," etc.*



WITHDRAWN

New York

Chicago

Fleming H. Revell Company

London

and

Edinburgh

Copyright, 1924, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

2565
Printed in the United States of America

237.4
C188
H

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 75 Princes Street

Foreword



FOR all in whose homes there is a vacant chair, and in whose hearts there is a hungering to find out whatever may be known touching the unseen realm into which their loved ones have gone, and into which they themselves must ere long go, these pages have specially been written.

No subject has been more eagerly discussed during recent years than the destiny of the dead. It is one of those questions that cannot be put down. A French philosopher has truly said that "man is incurably religious," and although his immortal longings may be for a time stifled, they cannot be extinguished.

One of the signs of the times, pathetic in some respects, but full of significance as affording evidence of the unabated interest in the life beyond, is the rapid spread of spiritualism. It has swept over the world like a

FOREWORD

mighty tidal wave. It would surprise our complacent Christian leaders to discover how many have forsaken the churches and are running to and fro seeking to find light and comfort from spiritualism and kindred cults. For this the Church is largely to blame inasmuch as it has failed to maintain the balance of truth, and has given emphasis to the earthward side of religion while largely ignoring our relations to the hereafter.

To meet the need of the times it behooves us to recover our interest in this neglected subject, making a fresh investigation of it from every point of view, and coming to its consideration with humble hearts and with readiness of mind to accept the truth from whatever quarter it may come and in whatever form it may be presented. In this spirit the following study has been undertaken, in the hope that it may bring to perplexed and sorrowing souls something of that vision of an open heaven bending over this earth in blessing which Jesus promised to give. In the light

FOREWORD

of the teaching of Jesus Heaven is no longer dim and shadowy, but is revealed as never before in all its effulgent glory to a grief-stricken world, offering its comfort and help, making itself known as the eternal home which lies at the end of man's swiftly passing pilgrimage.

J. M. C.

Claremont, Cal.

Contents

I. GREATER THINGS	11
II. AN OPEN HEAVEN	17
III. HOW IS HEAVEN OPENED? . .	22
IV. WHERE IS HEAVEN?	29
V. COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHED BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH	33
VI. FAITH VERSUS DEMONSTRATION	41
VII. CELESTIAL TELEGRAPHY . .	47
VIII. WHAT HAS PSYCHICAL RE- SEARCH TO OFFER?	53
IX. THE MASTER-KEY	59
X. THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE . .	66
XI. THE CHRISTIAN HEAVEN . .	72
XII. A SPIRITUAL HEAVEN . .	76
XIII. AN ETHICAL HEAVEN . .	84
XIV. A GRADED HEAVEN	91
XV. A SOCIAL HEAVEN	96
XVI. A PREPARED PLACE	101

CONTENTS

XVII. A PLACE OF REUNION . . .	107
XVIII. AN ABIDING ABODE . . .	113
XIX. A SPHERE OF ENLARGED AC- TIVITY	119
XX. THE HEAVENLY LIFE A PAT- TERN FOR THE EARTHLY LIFE	125
XXI. HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP . . .	130
XXII. LIVING THE ETERNAL LIFE IN THE TEMPORAL	135
XXIII. HEAVEN'S CHIEF CHARACTER- ISTIC	140
XXIV. HEAVEN'S CHIEF ATTRACTION.	146
XXV. HEAVEN'S CHIEF JOY . . .	151
XXVI. TAKING THE FUTURE UPON TRUST	157
XXVII. LEAVING OUR BELOVED DEAD IN THE FATHER'S HANDS . . .	162
XXVIII. IN ETERNAL BONDS . . .	167
XXIX. ENTERING IN FOREVER . . .	176
XXX. A NEW BEGINNING	180
XXXI. FULFILMENT	187

I

GREATER THINGS

*"Eternal progress moving on
From state to state the spirit walks."*

—TENNYSON.



THE revelation of spiritual things which God has given and is still giving to the children of men is progressive, not static. It is ever unfolding, ever enlarging, ever growing from more to more. The path of those who follow it in the gray of the morning becomes "a dawning light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." They receive an increase of light in the measure in which they are able to bear it and to profit by it.

One of those to whom this enlarging vision of heavenly truth was promised was Nathanael, a noble youth, whom Jesus at the beginning of His ministry called to be one of His standard

HEAVEN OPENED

bearers. The short and simple story of their meeting runs thus :

“ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile ! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me ? Jesus answered and saith unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

In the words “ thou shalt see greater things than these,” Jesus intimated to Nathanael that he would receive a larger revelation of spiritual things, that he would keep moving on from great to still greater things. What great things did Nathanael already see ? Jesus makes this clear in the words, “ Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Believest thou ? Thou shalt see greater things than these.” The convincing proof to

GREATER THINGS

Nathanael that Jesus was the Messiah was that He knew all about him. In the same way the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at Jacob's well, reasoned when, leaving her water-pot, she ran to the city of Sychar, saying to the men, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

With regard to the soul-struggle through which Nathanael passed under that fig tree nothing is said. It was evidently something which Nathanael believed to be known to God alone; and the simple fact that Jesus had been an unseen witness to his struggle brought him to bow adoringly at Jesus' feet, exclaiming, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." The great thing that Nathanael saw in Jesus of Nazareth was the Eternal Christ for whose advent the world was waiting, and the greater things he was yet to see were the things which constituted the still larger revelation of Christ, and of His mission to humanity.

The larger things which Nathanael saw are

HEAVEN OPENED

to be seen by all believing souls. The reward of faith is stronger faith. By our present experiences we are being fitted for loftier and grander visions of truth. All development must of necessity take place along the plane which we now occupy. The astronomer by bending his energies to the studies of the heavenly bodies, has his recompense in a clearer understanding of their nature and movements; every discovery that the chemist makes in his laboratory widens his world and makes it possible for still larger discoveries; so every truth-seeking soul who lives and moves and has his being in the spiritual sphere, comes to see things within it which from other eyes are hid, and a revelation of spiritual truth is given to him upon an ever-ascending scale. It follows from this that just as the scientific expert is an authority within his own domain, so the religious expert is an authority within his domain; and when one invades the domain of the other he goes into a *terra incognita*, regarding which he can lay claim to no special knowledge.

GREATER THINGS

We live in a universe ever enlarging to our vision. In the physical realm science is widening our world with a rapidity which is bewildering. The line between the spiritual and the natural is being wiped out. Space is being obliterated. The whole world has become one vast whispering-gallery and by the use of the radio, wireless communication is being established with places hitherto regarded as unreachable. That new disclosures touching the unseen realm are possible ought not to be questioned by any in this modern age in which marvelous discoveries are continually being made in every other sphere of human knowledge.

The heavenly Father is not yet through with the tuition of His children. He has many things to communicate and has sent His Spirit to guide us into all the truth which it is needful for us to know. He has not only more light to break forth from His holy Word, as Pastor Robinson, of Leyden, reminded the voyagers of the *Mayflower*, He has also more light to break forth from the enveloping spiritual uni-

HEAVEN OPENED

verse. Who knows what greater revelations of truth may be at hand for those who are ready to receive them? As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews enjoins us:

“Leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection.”

II

AN OPEN HEAVEN

*"Heaven open'd wide
Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound
On golden hinges moving."*

—MILTON.



WHEN saying that "the universe is not a solid block," Professor William James had in mind the universe of outward phenomena, which to his anointed eyes had many openings in it, through which men may look and read something of the thoughts and purposes of its Great Creator. The same is true of the enveloping spiritual universe, the Christian symbol for which is Heaven. It is an open Heaven and yet the prevailing conception of it is that it is closed; and that nothing whatever is known about what is going on within its fast-barred gates, and this in the face of a definite declaration of Jesus that it was to be opened.

HEAVEN OPENED

He affirmed that its secrets were about to be disclosed, and that it was to be brought closer into relationship with earth. In the words, "Ye shall see heaven opened," He intimated that a new epoch was about to begin, that a higher stage of development was about to be reached, that a new chapter was about to be added to the process of divine revelation. From this time forth, men were to know more of Heaven, and be brought into closer contact with it; the gates which stood ajar were to be thrown wide open; the darkness resting upon the future was to be dispelled and the great realities of life and immortality which had been obscured through the preceding ages, were to be "brought to light."

Has the promise been kept? Has the opening of Heaven taken place? If so, what cause there is for rejoicing! A new day has dawned, things hidden from the ages past have been revealed; the eternal verities of the spirit-world have been brought into view; the life beyond the tomb has been changed from a matter of

AN OPEN HEAVEN

doubt to one of sunny certainty; the agonising cry, "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens," has been answered. The heavens having been rent, the light of the upper world falls upon the pathway of men. Those who follow Christ do not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. Above them is an open Heaven into which their thoughts can travel, and out of which they can receive inspiration and strength in the battle of life. To say with Tertullian, "When this world shall pass away, then the kingdom of Heaven shall be opened," is to push into the distant future what belongs to the present. Heaven is open now, it is open all the way up to the Eternal Throne, and to the heart of the Eternal Father, and because it is open, all may see it and enter into it.

As we study the life of Jesus we find heaven opened to us in every part of it, not merely in connection with sudden, spectacular events, but through the revelation of spiritual things given in His teachings and in His unfolding life. Those who walked with Him and talked with

HEAVEN OPENED

Him insensibly became aware of what heaven is like. They dwelt in heavenly places. In all that He said and did, Heaven was brought to their wondering view.

In its totality, Christ's earthly work was nothing less and nothing else than the bringing of the heavenly world to the understanding of men, and the bringing of its treasures into their possession.

But while Christ has opened heaven wide enough to reveal some of its secrets and to bring to us our spiritual supplies in larger measure, it has not been opened wide enough to bring into view everything within. The veil has not been lifted, but it has been riven so that we can catch glimpses of the glories within, hitherto hidden from mortal ken.

But although darkness has been pierced at many points, all the shadows resting upon that world of mystery have not been dispelled. There are ultimate mysteries for the unveiling of which we have to wait. All that Jesus ever promised to do, He has done. He has fur-

AN OPEN HEAVEN

nished us with knowledge of the unseen world which it is necessary for us to possess in this work-a-day world. His revelation of the future is intentionally and wisely limited. It gives us as much as we need—and no more. It does not give enough to satisfy curiosity, but it does give enough to create faith, to inspire hope, to assuage sorrow, to banish fear, to purify motive, and to lure our lingering feet into the upward way. Were it taken away it would be as if the sun were blotted out of the heavens. All certain knowledge of the after-life would be gone, one of the noblest incentives to unworldly living would be taken out of life, and we should stumble on in a darkness like to that of the pre-Christian ages, when men were uncertain of the way, and still more uncertain of the goal. It is Christ alone who gives us an open heaven.

“What comfort, Lord, to those is given
Who seek in Thee their rest.
And find on earth an opening heaven
And in Thy peace are blest.”

—C. H. DESSLER.

III

HOW IS HEAVEN OPENED?

*"Believ'st thou in Eternal things?
Thou knowest in thine inmost heart
Thou art no clay; thy soul hath wings,
And what thou see'st is but part."*

—J. W. PARSONS.



AS Heaven opened to Nathanael in a literal or a spiritual sense? Clearly in the latter. There is no evidence whatever, that Heaven was opened to him in any other way. No vision of the parting of the skies above his head, no down-streaming of heavenly glory such as was given to Jesus at His baptism ever fell upon Nathanael's bodily eyes, but he saw what was better; he saw Heaven opened to the eyes of his soul. Nor is there any evidence whatever that he enjoyed any mystical vision such as came to John when he said, "I saw

HOW IS IT OPENED?

the holy city, new Jerusalem." From the fact that the name of Nathanael drops out of the sacred record it is evident that he was one of the less conspicuous of the apostolic group, and that his experience was that of the average Christian. The opening of Heaven came to him as it comes to us, by inward and not outward vision. The things of the invisible realm which he saw were the things seen by every one, who walks by faith and not by sight.

The opening of Heaven was promised to Nathanael as the reward of his open-mindedness. He was to see opening before him a new spiritual universe, of which his new-found Master is Lord and King.

Those to whom Heaven is opened, are those who open their hearts to heaven. By faith they see the invisible. Their faith "builds in the dungeon and the lazar-house its noblest shrine, and upon roofs of stone that shut out the eye of heaven ascends the ladder where angels glide to and fro—prayer." Prayer will not long continue with those who believe that

HEAVEN OPENED

Heaven is shut. It is the confidence that it is open that keeps man praying.

To see Heaven it is not necessary that we get to the other side. From the place where we now stand we may behold its gates of pearl. The humblest spot may be the place where Heaven and earth shall meet. In the midst of life's commonplace affairs, in the busy mart where men jostle one another, may come at any time the moment of revelation, and to our anointed eye,

“ Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.”

Often Heaven is seen out of the heart of a great trouble. It is seen from the valley of humiliation when it is not visible from the mountain top of realised ambition. It was so with Jacob. As Horace Bushnell remarks, “Great trials make great saints. Deserts and stone pillows prepare us for an open heaven, and an angel-crowned ladder.” Many have stood by an open grave hoping to see Heaven

HOW IS IT OPENED?

through it, but Heaven does not lie in that direction. When out of the heart of their bereavement they have looked up, they have seen Heaven, as miners see the stars at mid-day, when looking up out of the darkness of the long, telescopic shaft. Above every mourner's head is Heaven opened, and Heaven's messengers are on the way to bring him succor. But it needs anointed eyes to see the vision.

The reason why men fail to see an open Heaven is because they do not look intently and persistently enough. Where no openings appear they may be made by the very intensity of desire.

“The soul can split the skies in two
And let the things of heaven shine through.”

To those who tarry for it the vision comes; to those who look for the returning Christ He manifests Himself; to those who keep gazing upward will the gleaming of Heaven's golden gates be seen.

The reason why Heaven can be seen at all is

HEAVEN OPENED

because it is near. It bends low over us; it lies around us; it is within us. "The soul needeth not to go far," says Jacob Boehme, "for when the body dies there is heaven and hell." They are often seen before that. When the *Hallelujah Chorus* was being born in Handel's soul, he afterward said, "I did see all Heaven open before me." This vision gave birth to the heavenly strains which became, in turn, a medium of vision to other souls.

The opening of Heaven that comes to the prepared soul is as Edmund H. Sears expresses it, "none else than the opening upward of the inward mind, until it lies manifest under the divine celestial presence, which is above it and within it as another day."

But a spiritual Heaven must be spiritually discerned. It is seen only by those whose inner eyes have been opened. When Jacob slept on his stone pillow, his senses were locked up to earthly scenes, and his inner eyes were opened to the things of the spiritual realm. When Elisha's servant, in answer to the prophet's

HOW IS IT OPENED?

prayer, had his inner eyes opened he saw the unseen protectors around the walls of the beleaguered city of Dothan. When Peter's eyes were opened on the Mount of Transfiguration he beheld an outshining of his Lord's glory not discernible to mortal eyes; when Stephen's inner eyes were opened he saw from the place of his martyrdom the vision of the glorified Christ, to which the bystanders were blind; when the inner eyes of Saul of Tarsus were opened on the Damascus road he saw a Face which those who accompanied him did not see. In these instances, the outward marvels were merely the signs of the greater things which were inwardly revealed to the soul.

The sense of the unseen is a thing of varying degrees. Some of us hardly possess it, but with most of us it is feeble. With a few it is keen. As the skies are opened to the astronomer, and he sees things which are hidden from others, so those who have fineness of spiritual perception see things in the spiritual realm unseen by others. "I do not see these things in Nature,"

HEAVEN OPENED

remarked a lady who was standing before one of 'Turner's pictures. "Don't you wish you did?" was the reply of the artist, who happened to be near. Upon a certain occasion Jesus exclaimed, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." To the child-like the secrets of the Heavenly Kingdom stand revealed.

"The worlds are ours, 'tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic Heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky."
—JOHN KEBLE.

IV

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

*"How far is heaven? Not very far, my friend;
A single hearty step will all thy journey end."*

—JOHANNES SCHEFFER.



WHEN the promise was made by Jesus that heaven was to be opened, what did He mean? He evidently meant that "the heaven of heavens," "the highest heaven," the upper part of God's spirit universe, which in the letter to the Hebrews is called "heaven itself," was to be opened, so that things hitherto concealed should be known, and a richer stream of blessing fall upon the heads of men.

The Jewish conception of the upper world which lay in the background of all Christ's teaching, divided heaven into three distinct spheres, rising tier upon tier. First, there was the aerial heaven—the lower skies that envelop

HEAVEN OPENED

the earth, in which clouds float, and birds fly. This is the region referred to in Genesis 1 : 18, where it is said, "God called the firmament heaven." Above that is the stellar heavens, the upper firmament, in which the planets revolve. It is this heaven which is to "pass away with a great noise," and its elements "dissolve with fervent heat." Higher than these is the residence of the Most High God; the place where His throne is set, and where His glory is manifested. It was to this highest heaven, and not to the upper part of the created world, the world that has been heaved up, that Jesus ascended. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "He passed through the heavens," that is, through the lower heavens, and "ascended far above all heavens," into the Holy Place where the divine glory dwelleth. It was into this third heaven that Paul was caught up, and into which our Great High Priest has entered, there to appear in the presence of God for us.

The distinction between "the heavens" and

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

“Heaven” is one which is always carefully observed by the writers of the New Testament. When on the occasion of the baptism of Jesus it is said that “the heavens were opened to him,” what is meant is that the veil was rent from the bottom to the top and *all* the heavens were opened to Him, “so that the whole spirit world, upward, downward, and around, should be thrown open to His view.” By this transcendent vision, given to Him at the beginning of His public ministry He received the assurance that all the resources of the spirit world were at His disposal and that all the forces for good in the universe could be counted upon to ally themselves with Him in the work which He had undertaken.

It is to the upper heaven—Heaven itself—that the Christian ascends at death. He does not linger in any lower heaven, but passes up through the connected spheres to his supra-mundane home. He leaves one of God’s dwellings for another. As Philip James Bailey puts it,

HEAVEN OPENED

“ We bow our heads
In going out, we think, and enter straight
Another golden chamber of the King,
Larger than that we leave, and lovelier.”

Down here we dwell with God, up there we dwell with Him in a closer, dearer way. Making a personal application of this thought, Spurgeon says, “ While I am here I will be a child at home with my God. The whole world shall be His house to me and when I ascend to the upper chamber I shall not change my company, nor even change the house, I shall only be in the upper story forever.” To be in the upper story of the Father’s house is to attain the consummation of the fondest hopes that mortal man can cherish; it is to realise the highest bliss of which mortal man can dream.

“ Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy!
Ear hath not heard its deep sounds of joy;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair—
Sorrow and death may not enter there;
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom;
For beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb,
It is there, it is there, my child.”

—FELICIA HEMANS.

V

COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHED BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Heaven is nearer to our souls than the earth is to our bodies. Faith in human immortality stands or falls with the belief of absolute values."

—W. R. INGE.



SCIENTISTS are speculating about the possibility of establishing communication between this world and our nearest neighbour, Mars. But something more wonderful than that has been achieved; namely, the establishment of direct communication between this world and Heaven. Some measure of communication there always has been, but since the coming of Christ a new connection between the two worlds has been made; so that messages can be sent to Heaven, and answers be received from Heaven in a manner not possible before. The soul can bow

HEAVEN OPENED

in prayer with "the living and abiding consciousness that earth and heaven are no longer kept asunder." So close and intimate is the connection that what is done here is known there, and what is purposed there is fulfilled here. The two worlds are no longer two, but one.

To draw earth and Heaven together and effect a union between them was the mission of Jesus. In His prophetic word to Nathanael this aspect of His work is specifically described. Not only was Nathanael to see Heaven opened, he was also to see "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." The illustration is taken from the dream of Jacob, on the plains of Bethel, when sleeping upon a stone pillow he saw a ladder between Heaven and earth, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. The truth of which Jacob caught a fleeting glimpse is now revealed in fulness, for the important thing about his dream was not the form of it, but the fact that through it he was made aware of God, and

COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHED

that the desert place was a Bethel, a house of God, where he and God met.

This is not a detached world. It is part of one great whole which we designate the universe and hence it cannot be understood by itself, but only in relation to that higher world with which it is linked. The two worlds may be looked upon as the upper and lower hemispheres of one great sphere. They are within easy reach of each other. They touch; they interpenetrate; between them there is a constant play of cosmic forces. As modern science has obliterated space, and brought places widely separated within speaking distance, so Heaven and earth have been brought together, and "a permanent condition of mutual intercourse established between them."

This union of Heaven and earth is said to take place through the agency of Christ. The ascent and descent of the celestial messengers is "upon the Son of man." He is the Golden Ladder by which heaven and earth are inseparably connected. He has established new

HEAVEN OPENED

points of contact between them. In all that He taught and in all that He did, His one aim was to bring them more closely together.

The New Testament represents Jesus as "reconciling all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven," and thus restoring the oneness between them which sin had destroyed. He is the bond of union between all worlds, the one "in whom all things consist," or "hold together." He has brought the most remote parts of God's universe nearer to one another, that they might enter into more intimate fellowship. As part of the explanation of the way in which this has been done, the old divines were wont to represent His human nature as the foot of the ladder resting upon earth, and His divine nature as the top of the ladder reaching to Heaven. As He is the one Mediator between God and man and because He partakes of the nature of both, so He is the connecting medium, the Living Link, between the heavenly and the earthly spheres, because He is related to both. He

COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHED

came from heaven. He dwelt on earth that He might draw earth and heaven together and bring them into harmony with the divine order.

A pilgrim was once climbing a sacred mountain in China, upon his knees. As he reached its summit he said aloud, "I am looking for Heaven. I have looked continually, I keep groping, but I cannot find the door." If he had found Jesus he would have found the door; yes, he would have found Heaven itself open above his head, and through the open Heaven he would have seen a shining pathway reaching down to the spot where he stood. Upon this heart-aching mystery of the unseen realm Jesus alone gives light which men need. He is the one "that openeth," the one who holds in His nail-pierced hand the keys of the spiritual kingdom. He speaks of Himself as "the way"—the Living Way to the unseen Father; the Appointed Way to the unseen home. His mediumship is the most distinctive and comprehensive thing in His earthly work, so that in speaking of Himself as the medium of constant

HEAVEN OPENED

intercourse between Heaven and earth He is giving the most fundamental interpretation of His mission as the Son of man.

In the ascent and descent of the angels upon the Son of man the ministry of Heaven to earth is symbolised. Along the pathway which Christ has opened, yea upon Him as "the new and living way," Heaven's messengers come down, and we who are the object of Heaven's interest are ministered to by unseen hands. Regarding these celestial beings, the question is asked, as if it admitted of no dispute, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" It is the belief of many that their ministry is not yet ended but that

"Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still celestial music floats
O'er all this weary world."

The connection of angels with our higher interests is represented by Jesus as being most intimate. They are the guardians of the little

COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHED

ones; they are the revealers of God's will; they are heaven's message-bearers to man; they rejoice over the repentant sinners; they upbear the precious dead on their homeward journey; they are the comforters of those who are in sorrow; they are the helpers of those who are in trouble. In all they do they act as the servants of the King, carrying out His purposes of grace touching the children of men.

It is to be remembered that in speaking of the unseen realm, Jesus was under the necessity of using the thought-forms of His own time. He had to do this in order to make connections. Had He spoken in the scientific language of today, His words would have been meaningless to those to whom they were originally addressed. His words upon the subject of angelology have therefore to be interpreted in the light of the belief of His day. But when that has been said, we cannot get away from the central truth in His words, that behind the world of natural phenomena there is a spirit-world with which this world is intimately con-

HEAVEN OPENED

nected, and that in some way God's angels can reach us from there with their messages and ministries of love. But, when, after all the difficulties upon the subject have been duly considered, may not those be wisest, who, retaining something of the simplicity of spiritual childhood, still

“Keep the holy faith in God, in man,
And in the angels ministrant between”?

VI

FAITH VERSUS DEMONSTRATION

"Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."—JOHN 20:29.



IGN-SEEKERS who crave demonstration regarding the unseen world have greatly multiplied in the present day. Not content to go on believing what they cannot prove, they seek to prove before they believe. Having discarded faith as a certain guide, they fain would find rest from their doubts and questionings in something outward, something palpable to the senses. They want to find proof for the inward in the outward, for the spiritual in the physical. This tendency is to be deplored on the ground that it is an evidence of the decay of faith.

And, surely, it is a going backward. It is a

HEAVEN OPENED

return to naturalism, a searching in the one zone for what belongs to another. God's unfolding plan is marked by progress from the natural to the spiritual. When outward connection with our loved ones has been broken by death, it is that spiritual connection may be established. Hence union and communion with our blessed dead is to be sought for, not by material, but by spiritual means. Precisely on this footing is the presence of Christ on earth since His bodily departure, to be experienced and explained. His presence is veiled, it is made real to the soul, not to the senses. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The hope is indulged that some new mode of communication with the unseen world may yet be discovered; that by knocking a little harder, and more persistently, doors that have hitherto remained closed may be opened. But the hope is vain. Demonstration to the senses touching the existence of a world of spirit im-

FAITH Vs. DEMONSTRATION

pinging upon this, is not to be expected. That which belongs to a different sphere of things must always be taken upon trust.

Yet there is nothing to prevent the veil that hides the unseen from becoming thinner, and the encroachment of the spiritual world upon the physical from becoming closer. Speaking before the English Society for Psychical Research, the eminent scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge, said, "On the question of the hereafter the excavators are engaged in boring a tunnel from opposite ends. Amid the roar of the water and the other noises, we are beginning to hear the strokes of the pick-axes of our comrades on the other side." And the hope is expressed that before long the dividing walls may be broken through, and the two sets of explorers stand face to face. That this hope is doomed to disappointment is evident when we consider that it presupposes that those who are upon the higher plane must come down and go through some form of materialisation, whereas the law of development demands that those who are on

HEAVEN OPENED

the lower plane must rise to the higher plane where alone spirit with spirit can meet.

The longing for intercourse with those within the veil is natural, and cannot be put down. Aching hearts instinctively call after their loved ones as they pass through the gate that swings inward, and does not open outward. But nothing but sorrow and disappointment can come to those who look in the wrong direction for the re-establishment of this intercourse. To the heart's bitter cry there is no answering voice. The land into which our loved ones have gone is the land of silence. The longing for "the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still" remains ungratified. The spiritualistic unifications regarding the opening of communication with the departed are far from satisfactory. Our veneration for the dead is shocked when we hear of the trifling nature of the communications ascribed to them. The appeal to the senses touching things belonging to the soul is a delusion and a snare, and is foredoomed to

FAITH Vs. DEMONSTRATION

failure. There is all the more reason, therefore, for our following the only way open to us and exemplify "the childlike faith that asks not sight, nor seeks for wonders or for signs." We have to walk by faith and not by sight. And it is better so. In doing this we are not following an illusion; for faith gives a sense of the invisible world which is just as real as the impression of the visible which reaches us through physical senses. It has been described by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews as "the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of the giving of substance to things not seen." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

Whatever the future may disclose, the unseen world is still "the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns" to tell its secrets. The only wise attitude, therefore, for us to maintain in reference to it, is that of

HEAVEN OPENED

calm acceptance of whatever limitations of knowledge the All-Wise may see fit to impose, and while eagerly following up any hint that may be given of widening knowledge, and prizing any sign of fresh influx of light, patiently wait for the time of perfect revelation, when the day shall break and the shadows flee away.

“ We have but faith: we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.”
—TENNYSON.

VII

CELESTIAL TELEGRAPHY

"If I lived near a King and you were in prison, assuredly I should send you everything I could from the court."—EUGÉNIE DE GUÉRIN.



It is admitted by the most advanced spiritualists that the difficulty in "getting through" on the part of those who wish to communicate with the friends they left behind is very great, one of the most formidable obstacles being the lack of a celestial code. Human speech is altogether inadequate to describe heavenly things. As you cannot convey the proper idea of colour to the blind, or of music to the deaf, you cannot convey the proper idea of spiritual realities to those who are upon a lower plane. That which can be made known to them is only external conditions.

HEAVEN OPENED

When two mated souls are parted by death there is often a strong conviction that their separation will be merely outward, and that the good God will allow them to keep in touch with each other. Often the promise is made by the one who is going, that if permission be granted, communication will be established from the other side with the one who is left behind. That such a deep and ineradicable desire is left ungratified it is difficult to believe. The only question that seems to be left open is as to how this communication is to be carried on—whether by some improved method of outward communication or by some enlarged exercise of mental telepathy, following the laws governing the ordinary communication of spirit with spirit.

Many have a strong conviction that the truth lies in the latter direction, and they believe that they can come into actual contact with the dear ones who have gone. They feel the touch of their spirit-hand; they hear the whispering of their spirit-

CELESTIAL TELEGRAPHY

voice; they commune with them in spirit, and believe that they obtain their higher point of view regarding many of the things that perplex them; that they are ministered to by their unseen hands, and are helped by them in the battle of life. This mystic, sweet communion does not come when attending a séance in a darkened room, when watching the movements of a ouija board, when listening to table rappings, when reading cryptic messages from a double slate, mysteriously fastened, or when listening to a commonplace message from an Indian sage, given through a medium of doubtful veracity; but rather when the soul is opened heavenward and waits reverently and prayerfully for any message that may come from the great enveloping spirit-world that presses upon us all. And this opportunity is closed to no seeking soul.

This abiding fellowship is not a matter of speculation but of experience, and has a value which no outward demonstration could possibly possess. It is one of the heart's secrets

HEAVEN OPENED

not to be babbled about and is told to only sympathetic and understanding souls. The present writer has tender experiences of this kind, not to be spoken of, but he ventures to break the seal of silence to the extent of recording one little incident. His mother and he were chums. Providence had led him to leave her for a foreign land, and he was there when her final sickness came. Her going was not easy and her letters expressed a longing for release. One night he was awakened from sleep by a pressure upon his shoulder, and, starting up, he asked, "Who is there?" The answer that came out of the silence was, "It is your mother come to tell you of her liberation, while on the way to the better land." When in the morning he told his wife of his experience she said, "You must have been dreaming." But it was no dream, for in due time came the black-bordered letter telling that his mother had passed away at that time. Cases like this can be easily multiplied.

CELESTIAL TELEGRAPHY

Heaven is nearer than we think and can be easily reached. It lies around us not in our infancy only but through all the stages of our earthly life.

The present writer delights to liken it to an island which lies out in the Pacific Ocean within the range of vision. As he looks from his study window, sometimes it stands out in the sunlight in clear outline, sometimes it is shrouded in mist and disappears from sight, but whether hidden or revealed, it is always there for the seeing, and is an object of unceasing interest. That island was at one time his home. He has many friends there still. At first the only way of communicating with them was by mail carried in a ship. After a time the wireless telegraph was established, and more recently the wireless telephone has brought the island within speaking distance. Still more recently, that marvel of marvels, the radio, by which space seems to have been practically obliterated, has brought my Island friends into even closer touch with me. The message

HEAVEN OPENED

which they broadcast may be caught up by me, and the message which I broadcast may be caught up by them, so that we are virtually speaking face to face. In these ways space is being obliterated, and those that were formerly far remote are brought into the closest touch with one another. And may it not be that in the spirit realm, as in the natural, there shall be such a development of intercommunication that Heaven and earth will, to our conscious experience, be brought closer together than in our most daring dreams we ever thought possible?

Let death between us be as naught,
A dried and vanished dream;
Then joy, be the reality,
Our mortal life the dream!

VIII

WHAT HAS PSYCHICAL RESEARCH TO OFFER?

*"God, stooping, shows sufficient of His light
to rise by."*



IN an indirect way the contribution of Psychical Research to the problem of the after life has been considerable. In an age sinking into the mire of materialism it has emphasised the reality of the spirit, has held for the persistence of personality after death in a life independent of the physical body, and has declared for the survival of memory and affection, the retention of interest on the part of the dead in the world they have left, their desire to know what is going on in it, and the equal desire to communicate what they have come to know in their new abode. The move-

HEAVEN OPENED

ment has drawn into itself a number of eminent scientists and men of letters, who have shown themselves to be honest, intelligent, patient investigators.

But the results they have to show are exceedingly meagre. This they themselves frankly admit. The leaders characterise the movement as "still in the John the Baptist stage," although it is nearly a hundred years old; and with a strange inconsistency they speak of it in the same breath as a "New Revelation" and a "New Religion." It is neither. Spiritualism or Spiritism is as old as the human race. Belief in familiar spirits we find cropping out away back in the days of ancient Israel, when Saul sought the aid of the Witch of Endor to call upon Samuel, with disappointing and disastrous results.

And while the investigation of Psychological Research is carried on in a spirit of candor, unfortunately the conclusions arrived at are vitiated by being obtained through the agency of professional clairvoyants, hypnotists, and

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

spiritualistic mediums or controls, many of whom have turned out to be fakes of the first water. Speaking of this class in general, Camille Flammarion, the celebrated French scientist, says, "It is infinitely to be regretted that we cannot trust the loyalty of the mediums. They almost all cheat." The same charge is made against the spirits themselves. They are described as "arrant liars." And even if they are not all "seducing spirits seeking whom they may deceive," they seem at best to be earth-bound spirits, whose leaden wings keep them from rising into the higher spheres. Moreover, the value of their communications is discounted by being concerned for the most part with very trivial matters, and by often being couched in very imperfect English, giving ground for the remark that most of the discarnate spirits with whom communication has been held are "disbrained spirits."

But even if we accept the genuineness of the phenomena it by no means follows that we are bound to accept the interpretation of them that

HEAVEN OPENED

may be given by those who certify to them. There is a psychic force working through mind-reading and through thought-transference by which many of them might be explained.

Perhaps the best concrete case on behalf of spiritism that has yet been given is that described in the tender and touching book by Sir Oliver Lodge, entitled, *Raymond, or Life and Death*. By the way of psychical research, Sir Oliver Lodge had arrived at a firm conviction touching the certainty of life beyond the grave, and the possibility of establishing connection with those who have passed out into the unseen, when his belief was put sharply to the test by the death of his son, Raymond, a noble, lovable youth who was killed by the bursting of a shell, in the World War. The sudden interruption of his letters changed at once the father's centre of interest from this to the other side of the grave. He wanted to come into direct communication with his boy and, in his spiritualistic experiments, he found that his boy was equally anxious to "get through," and impart

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

to him what knowledge he could with regard to his present condition.

In this attempt to reach his son, Sir Oliver engaged the services of "a secondary personality" in the person of a professional medium. Then follows an account of the various sésances recorded in the cautious and restrained language of a careful investigator. But how paltry are the results obtained! The communications are of the most commonplace character and add nothing of value to our knowledge of what lies within the veil. The general impression that they make is that spiritualism does not take us very far. And what a pathetic sight is that of this great scientist in the hour of overwhelming sorrow seeking for outward signs instead of falling upon his knees and seeking fellowship with his son in that inner sphere "where spirit with spirit can meet," and where all the boundary lines of time and space fall away! The weakness of the whole Psychical Research movement lies in the use of methods that are purely materialistic. It puts curiosity

HEAVEN OPENED

in the place of faith and seeks outward signs and sounds which appeal to the senses as evidences of spiritual things which can really be found only in the soul. Its basic error is that it seeks to reach the end sought by materialising the spiritual instead of by spiritualising the material.

“ If that merciful veil of azure
Were suddenly cleft in twain,
All doubt would instantly perish.
What merit would then pertain
To the rank and file of the faithful
Now doing their best in their place
For the love of right and the race? ”

IX

THE MASTER-KEY

"I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ accepted by the reason, solves for thee all questions in the earth and out of it."



THE Master-key which opens the secrets of the unseen world is Christ. He alone can tell us what lies within the veil, for He alone possesses first-hand knowledge. Where others merely guess, He asserts; where others merely reason, He reveals. As the Son of God He came down from the Eternal Heights that He might impart that positive and definite knowledge which the sons of men required to possess for their highest welfare. Upon His testimony we depend utterly for all authoritative knowledge concerning the life beyond.

HEAVEN OPENED

This being so, is it not passing strange that so many earnest souls who are eagerly seeking to find light concerning the world beyond should deliberately turn their backs upon Him, and should seek light from every other quarter than from Him? Sir Oliver Lodge, while speaking of Jesus with the profoundest reverence, as the greatest religious leader of all time, fails to sit at His feet, and turns from Him to professional spiritualistic mediums. Sir William Barrett, for many years President of the Society for Psychical Research, is more consistent. He is one of the very few who have retained the Christian faith while embracing spiritualism. From him comes this much-needed warning that "to know that the dead are alive is not to know Christ," his implication evidently being that to be ignorant of Christ is to come short of the goal of knowledge, and to remain in pre-Christian darkness touching the future life.

At a time of general defection, when because of His hard sayings many of His followers

THE MASTER-KEY

walked no more with Him, Jesus turned to the inner circle of His disciples and asked, "Will ye also go away?" Simon Peter, as their mouthpiece, answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Sorely baffled as they were, they know not where else to go for light and comfort when the great mysteries of life and death pressed upon them.

At many of the hard sayings of the Master they were greatly perplexed, but there was one thing which He made clear, one thing upon which no shadow rested, one thing regarding which their aching hearts were satisfied, and that was His teaching regarding "eternal life." He revealed to them as no one else had done, the vital connection between the visible and the invisible realms. Hence although greatly disturbed, and having to struggle hard to retain their faith, they beat back their rising doubts, resolved to cleave forever to the One who had given them "the words of eternal life," since He could be relied upon to guide their faltering

HEAVEN OPENED

feet to the Heaven above, which He had come to open.

At the first blush we are struck with the reticence of Jesus regarding the unseen world from which He came and to which we all must one day go. He knew the agonising eagerness of men to hear about it; He knew how patiently and persistently they had tried to unlock its mysteries. Why did He not do more to satisfy their unappeasable longings? Why did He leave so much untold? Part of the answer undoubtedly is, because mortal powers can look upon immortal things only in shaded light. The full light of the knowledge of the heavenly glory would so dazzle and blind our sight as to shut from view the things of earth, and the kingdom above the skies would absorb our interest and attention to the neglect of the kingdom on earth, which Christ is setting up and within which our present duties lie.

It is a great mistake, however, to imagine that Jesus has done but little to relieve the pressure of human inquiry with respect to the

THE MASTER-KEY

future life. He took that life for granted. He, Himself, lived and moved and had His being in the consciousness of it. It was perpetually present to His soul. His mind was saturated with the thought of it; He carried the atmosphere of it into the whole of His life. His references to it came so naturally out of existing conditions as to seem accidental. He was always careful to withhold pictures of outward conditions around which the overwrought imagination could play, and constantly aimed at directing the attention to the essential nature of the heavenly life, taking pains to open up its moral side, as the side about which it is most profitable for mankind to know. In short, He was more anxious to show the underlying qualities by which the heavenly life is distinguished, and the underlying principles by which it is governed, than to furnish descriptions of its glories and delights.

Jesus leaves us free to construct our own heaven, while simply furnishing the material with which the imagination can work. It is

HEAVEN OPENED

the *life eternal* that He sought to bring to view in His teachings. He did not unravel all the mysteries of the future, but He did give the only sure and certain words of eternal life which the world has ever heard. It is this note of sunny certainty that distinguishes Him from all other religious leaders. His teaching is positive rather than negative; it consists of divine affirmations. "In Him was 'Yea!'" On the other hand, the sacred books of other religions are full of probable guesses, or the wildest speculations. To those who are drifting out upon "the unknown sea that rolls around the world," they have no chart or compass to offer. In vain do fear-stricken souls search them for light and comfort. The utmost they can give is a flitting, fire-fly light amidst impenetrable darkness.

So it is everywhere outside the circle of Christian enlightenment. Contrast the dying words of Rabelais, "I am going to seek a great Perhaps," with those of Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have

THE MASTER-KEY

kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Can you wonder that there are still many who, while fighting their intellectual battles, and often strongly tempted to break away from Christ and follow after strange teachers, refuse to forsake Him, because He, and He alone, had and has the words of "eternal life"?

"From Heaven He came, of Heaven He spake,
To Heaven He led His followers' way,
Dark clouds of gloomy night He brake,
Unveiling an immortal day."

X

THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE

"The ancients dreaded death, the Christian can dread only dying."—"Guesses at Truth," by A. W. AND J. C. HARE.



O enter Heaven we must needs pass through the lonely gate of death. There is no other way of reaching the goal of our desires and hopes.

This gives to death a gracious aspect and changes it from a foe to a friend. That Christ has not only given us a new conception of death but effected important changes in our relation to it is believed in a general and indefinite way, but the nature of these changes has not been duly appreciated even within Christian circles. Impressed with the thought of the inestimable advantages coming to those living in the Christian age, the early Christians exclaimed, "Blessed are the dead who die in

THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE

the Lord from henceforth." They believed that from that point of time onward death would be different, that its whole aspect would be changed; that from being a loss, it would become a gain; that it would have an entirely new meaning, being at once the gate of exit from the old, and lower life, and of entrance into the new and loftier life. And all that, it could be, because Christ, by rising from the dead, had vanquished death, and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

Suggestive hints are given of important changes effected by Christ in the unseen world. He is represented as carrying at His girdle the keys of death and of hades, having vanquished the one and emptied the other. The time when He accomplished this is indicated in the words addressed to the penitent thief who was crucified along with Him,—“Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”

According to Jesus, Paradise was not the final state of bliss, although in Christian thought it has been often wrongly so regarded.

HEAVEN OPENED

It was the halfway house on the road, a place where "spirits in prison" waited for their release. It answered to the "Sheol" of the Old Testament. What Jesus promised the penitent robber was that on that very day, before the sun should set on Mount Moriah, he would meet him in hades. That tryst He kept, and when His mission there was accomplished, and he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, He took that ransomed soul with Him. Since then, things have been changed, no longer is there any stopping place on the way; no longer is there any weary waiting in a shadowy underworld; no longer is there an intermediate state stretching from death to the Day of Judgment. To every departing believer Jesus now says, "*Today* shalt thou be with me in Heaven." To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord. There is but a step between—instant death is instant glory.

But the most startling claim of all is that Christ has "abolished death." Is this true in

THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE

human experience? Is not death with us? Have we not all to meet it? How can it be said to have been abolished? It is very evident that death has not been abolished literally. Men still die; there is no discharge in the war with our great antagonist. All must enter the lists with him and be worsted in the fight. Yet in a true sense death *has* been abolished. The fact of it remains, but the fear of it has gone. No longer does it lie upon the world like a pall. It has been robbed of its terror, robbed of its sting. "Swallowed up of life," "swallowed up of victory."

But while the dread of death has been taken away, the dread of dying may remain. To part with this life, which to so many is so sweet, and with this world, which is so fair, is not easy. Nor is the separation of the spirit from the body easy, whether it come with the slow process of decay, "the feeble pulse fluttering into stillness," or with a sudden wrench accompanied by physical pain. And besides, the mystery of the future can seldom be faced

HEAVEN OPENED

without shrinking. But over all these, Christian faith can triumph. It can triumph over dying as well as over death. It can make the dying bed "as soft as downy pillows are." John Bunyan represents Christian when fording the River of Death as beginning to sink, and crying to his good friend, Hopeful, "I sink in deep waters as the billows go over my head, and all his waves go over me." "Be of good cheer, my brother," replied Hopeful, "I feel the bottom, *and it is good.*" But even if the bottom be not felt, no evil need be feared, for there is One standing by who whispers in the ear, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee," and His mighty arm will bear us safely over.

Onlookers said of the early Methodists, "They die well." Many of them met "the unseen with a cheer." But things have changed and hilarious dying has gone out of fashion. We muffle our emotions and sometimes we are silent because we have no emotions to muffle.

THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE

Our attitude is largely negative, and consists in the absence of fear rather than in the possession of an active, vital hope. Having excluded from our thought the Christian vision of Heaven, there is nothing to be jubilant about. Let Heaven be restored as a practical force in the religious life, and death will be as if it were not. In the brightness of Heaven's glory, death is blotted out.

“There is no death. The leaves may fall,
The flowers may fade and pass away,—
They only wait through wintry hours
The coming of the May.”

—J. L. MCCREERY.

XI

THE CHRISTIAN HEAVEN

"There shall be no curse any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."—REVELATION 22: 3-5.



THE Christian Heaven as reflected in the teachings of Jesus and His apostles is one of transcendent sublimity. In this it is in striking contrast with the heaven of other religions and especially of the modern substitutes which have been furnished by spiritualism. This latter conception is decidedly low in its ethical tone, while its outward setting is trivial and tawdry, being little more than the prolongation in the

THE CHRISTIAN HEAVEN

hereafter of the present life with all its limitations and imperfections.

Spiritualist leaders in general, while discarding scornfully the “ harps, celestial choirs, and the golden streets ” of the apocalyptic vision of John, offer in their place a flat and colourless heaven, which makes no appeal to the imagination, awakens no lofty aspirations, and kindles no ecstatic hopes. Spiritualism conducts us into the kitchen rather than into the drawing-room, of the Palace of the King. It frankly declares that “ life on the other side of the screen of material things is neither better nor more moral than ours, it is entirely human, with all of the folly that resides in humanity.” Nothing is shed off, nothing gained,—it is a going on, not a going up.

Not a very attractive picture, surely. Indeed, in many of the instances given, it seems to be retrogression rather than advancement, and in no instance does anyone communicated with, appear to have acquired more actual knowledge concerning heavenly things than he had when

HEAVEN OPENED

here on earth, or to have been able in the slightest degree to add to the sum of human knowledge touching the unseen realms.

Of all the New Testament writers, John, the mystic and poet of the apostolic group, is the only one who attempts to portray in outward symbolism the glories of the heavenly world. In his great drama which concludes the New Testament canon, we have a description of Heaven which dazzles the imagination. Much of the imagery employed is drawn from Jewish sources, but the ideas underlying it appeal to the universal human heart. No more sublime description of Heaven is anywhere to be found. There is about it nothing of the commonplace. It makes Heaven big, and makes it shine forth in all its moral grandeur as the goal of human redemption, and the glorious consummation in which the dreams of men touching the highest good are absolutely fulfilled.

When we turn from the heaven of John to that of Jesus, we seem at first sight to be brought down from the heights, but in reality

THE CHRISTIAN HEAVEN

we ascend. Sublime simplicity is the chief characteristic of the teachings of Jesus, and this is always a true sign of greatness. What He has to say of Heaven awakens aspiration more than it gratifies curiosity. It sets before our minds a present reality rather than a distant dream. It makes Heaven the subject of a present experience rather than the object of a future hope.

“Thy presence makes our Paradise,
And where Thou art is Heaven.”

XII

A SPIRITUAL HEAVEN

*"The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul
of a man,
And the man said, 'Am I your debtor?'
And the Lord said, 'Not yet, but make it clean
as you can
And then I will let you a better.'"*

—TENNYSON.



THE ultimate realities are spiritual, the relation of the seen to the unseen is that of shadow to substance. As the senses connect us with the material world, something deeper within us connects us with the spiritual world. We touch it, and are touched by it; it is what Herbert Spencer calls "the absolute reality behind all phenomena"—the final goal and inheritance of the spirit.

All the descriptions given in the Bible of the

A SPIRITUAL HEAVEN

unseen world are necessarily inadequate. They are attempts to portray in human language things for which there are no earthly equivalents. And yet the reality must, in some degree, correspond with the figure. The law of correspondence upon which the system of interpretation developed by Swedenborg is based, furnishes the key which unlocks many secrets. Its acceptance by Milton is implied in the lines,—

“What if earth

Be but the shadow of Heaven, as things therein
Each to the other like, more than on earth is
thought.”

The outward things in creation are “types of things in the heavens,” and were designed to adumbrate spiritual realities. The natural symbol is the casket which contains the jewel, but it becomes a hindrance to faith unless we get through it to the spiritual reality which it contains.

When we think of the inner, unseen realm into which all the inhabitants of the earth pass

HEAVEN OPENED

at death, the question naturally arises, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" Paul had to face that question in his day, and in the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians he endeavours to answer it. In his answer he assumes that when the dead are raised up they have a body; they are not disembodied spirits, "ghosts blown along a wandering wind." They do not come forth "unclothed," but "clothed upon with their habitation which is from heaven." He assumes also that the dead are raised up in a changed body. "Behold I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." When they pass into the inner sphere it will be in a body adapted to it, just as their physical body was adapted to the physical sphere in which they formerly lived. Moreover, Paul's thought runs deeper than the "resurrection of the body," as the creeds of the Church have generally phrased it. The expression which he uses is "the resur-

A SPIRITUAL HEAVEN

rection of the dead." He does not ask, "How are the dead bodies which are in the grave raised up?" but "How are the *dead* raised up, and in what body do *they* come?" With him the resurrection is, primarily, the resurrection of persons, of persons rising up out of the earth-life in a body fitted for their new habitat. Touching the resurrection body Paul affirms:—

1. That it is not subject to decay. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." This distinguishes it from the physical body, which is subject to disease and death. Paul's thought is that in heaven a corruptible body would be entirely out of place. He distinctly declares that "flesh and blood cannot inherit incorruption." To match an incorruptible heaven there is given an incorruptible body.

One of the saddest experiences of life is the sense of physical infirmity, the gradual coming on of physical decay; our powers reach maturity and fade; our bodies are assailed by disease, and are to us a ceaseless care and trouble. When we change them as we would an outworn

HEAVEN OPENED

garment how thankful we should be that in their place we shall be given an incorruptible body, painless and perfect,—a body in which we shall find the fullest realisation of that eternal life of which we have now the prophetic beginnings in our souls. From the old body with all its ills, death brings a happy release, but it is the resurrection which brings that free, full, and perfect life which can be realised only in a body to which no weakness nor imperfection clings. With death our tent life ends; with the resurrection, life in our abiding habitation begins.

2. *That it is resplendent in the glory of the heavenly life.* “It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.” It is not the old body revived, but a new body, “like unto the glorious body of Christ.” This transformation which is not the least among the wonders of our great redemption, is in the Greek word for resurrection itself. Literally, it means “upstanding,” and suggests that the change which takes place when the soul leaves the body, is completed by

A SPIRITUAL HEAVEN

passing through to the other side, and standing up in a glorified body, to walk in newness of life amid scenes of undreamed of grandeur. Resurrection is more than the triumph over death, more than the deliverance from all that is alien and evil, it is immortality *plus* the completed richness and glory of the heavenly life.

3. *That it possess fulness of power.* "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." The physical body often proves a heavy clog to the soul. It hampers its action and hinders it from executing its purposes. The spirit is often willing when the flesh is weak. In the resurrection body weakness is changed to power. It will possess the unfailing vigor of immortal youth. Body will be so evenly matched with spirit that it will prove a perfect instrument in carrying out its behests. A sound mind in a sound body is the best that earth has to offer; a perfect mind in a perfect body is what heaven bestows.

4. *That it marks the transformation of the natural into the spiritual.* "It is sown a

HEAVEN OPENED

natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." The one is as much a reality as the other. Idealists deny the material, materialists, the spiritual; Scripture testifies to the existence of both. What the spiritual body is like, we cannot know. Even Paul's descriptions fall short of it. But one thing is plain, it grows out of the life of the spirit, and is the expression of essential character. Paul's figure is that of a grain of wheat which falls into the ground and dies, and springs up by its own inherent life. To every seed is given "its own body," the body which it creates, the organ in which its inner life finds proper embodiment. The resurrection body thus corresponds to the real life within; it is evolved from it; it is revelatory of it. There is nothing covered that it does not reveal. It will show what we are, and will make possible an intimacy of fellowship with others which was not possible when we were wrapped round with our poor earthly rags of concealment.

In a word, if the home to which we go at

A SPIRITUAL HEAVEN

death is spiritual, the body in which we go must be spiritual also.

“Dust to its narrow house beneath,
Soul to its place on high.”

This is the divine order, and is in harmony with the universal law of ascent,—first, the natural, and then the spiritual.

“In death’s unrobing room we strip from
round us
The garments of mortality and earth,
And breaking from the embryo state that
bound us
Our day of dying is our day of birth.”

XIII

AN ETHICAL HEAVEN

"All the analogies that modern knowledge can bring to bear upon the theory of a future life point to the opinion that the breach of physical continuity is not accompanied by any breach of ethical continuity."—JOHN FISKE.



REGARDING a noble personality, mature and complete, it was said, "Immortal? I feel it and know it. Who doubts it of such as he?" "There in Abraham's bosom," explains Augustine, "whatever it may be which that bosom signifies, lives my sweet friend." The fact of survival is a question of character. Goodness has survival value. It has been truly said that in the whole universe nothing really perishes that is worth keeping. The things that perish ought to perish. No life that is worth continuing will ever be snuffed out.

AN ETHICAL HEAVEN

According to Kant, immortality is a postulate of morality; or, as another has said, "Immortality is the evolution of morality." The two are born together, they grow together, they die together. In the New Testament, immortality is never represented as bare existence, but as a certain quality of life. But the immortal life which is here begun can never be carried out fully in the present state of being. This life is not long enough, and this world is not big enough, to afford scope for the working out of the moral problem, or adequately to reveal and justify the moral purpose of God.

By ignoring the ethical distinctions for which the terms heaven and hell stand, spiritualism has sought to do away with these two contrasted realities themselves. It ignores the possible permanence of selfishness as a principle of moral action, and as supplying the material for a possible hell; it ignores the fact that goodness and evil, purity and impurity, love and hatred, cannot possibly under a moral government, come to the same end; it knows

HEAVEN OPENED

nothing of the severity of a holy love that does not shrink from imposing remedial punishment. It is impossible to judge it until the whole process is completed.

The Life Beyond is always set forth in Scripture as a challenge to character, never as a matter of abstract speculation, but always in its relation to the present. The present and the future are indissolubly united. This is illustrated by Jesus in what He has to say about the right use of money, which He evidently regards as the acid test of character. To incite His followers to faithful stewardship He said, "Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail you they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." The implication is that money may be so invested here as to render good returns in the hereafter, that earthly wealth may be so used as to yield spiritual wealth in God's eternal kingdom.

Similar in their application are the words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the

AN ETHICAL HEAVEN

earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal, . . . for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." So closely connected are earth and Heaven that a man may carry on a large commerce between them, and may send on his accumulations to Heaven's treasure-house in advance, so that when he arrives there himself he may find them waiting him. Though poor towards man he may become increasingly rich towards God. A pauper here, there he may be rated as a multi-millionaire.

To the same effect are the words of the Master which enjoin us to turn from "the uncertain riches of earth," and seek "a treasure in the heavens which faileth not." And Paul tells us of what the true and enduring riches consist, when he counsels Timothy to "charge them that are rich in the present world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be willing to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come

HEAVEN OPENED

that they may lay hold on the life that is life indeed."

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus the other side of this truth is set forth. The motive of the story is to show that selfishness is a consuming fire. The veil is lifted and a glimpse is given into the world of final issues. The rich man, who in his wanton neglect left the beggar at his gate to starve, is in torment separated by an impassable gulf from the heaven of comfort which the beggar enjoys in Abraham's bosom. The one is in hell because hell is in him; the other, in heaven, for heaven is in him.

In the description of the final judgment given in Matthew's gospel, the criterion of judgment is shown to be the possession or non-possession of a spirit of benevolence. A contrast is drawn between those who live lives of loving ministry to others, and those whose selfish hearts lead them to close their ears to the cry of the needy and to pass heedlessly by on the other side of the road. The former

AN ETHICAL HEAVEN

class receive the King's approval and go away unto His eternal joy; the latter incur His sore displeasure and go away into age-long misery. And so throughout the entire New Testament the future life is viewed in its relation to the life that now is, purely on its ethical side, as the harvest of which the present is the spring-time.

And as the life beyond is ethical, its rewards are ethical; the crown bestowed upon the victor in life's battle is not a material one; but is described as a "crown of righteousness," "a crown of life," "a crown of glory," all of which figures imply that the rewards promised are spiritual, realised and enjoyed within the sphere of the spirit. It is what a man carries with him as he passes through the gate of death that constitutes his heaven or his hell.

The moral nature is prophetic. It not only intimates a hereafter, it intimates a hereafter based upon the kind of life that has been lived on earth. It instinctively feels that in the future world every man will "go to his own

HEAVEN OPENED

place," the place which rightfully belongs to him, the only place to which Infinite Justice and Mercy could possibly assign him. To say that what that place will be will depend on what he is morally, is just another way of saying that it will depend on himself.

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."
—MILTON.

XIV

A GRADED HEAVEN

"There is one glory of the Sun, and another of the Moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

—I CORINTHIANS 15:41-42.



ALL religions have in them the suggestion at heart of a graded heaven. The Jewish Rabbis conceived of a heaven containing a graded series of spheres, series in number corresponding to as many degrees of moral excellence. The Hindoo religion has its doctrine of transmigration which represents the soul as changing its habitation from one body to another in an endless series of upward or downward gradation. In the Christian religion the idea of a gradation of heavenly rewards is still more clearly taught. Its heaven is not a place of dull, flat uniform-

HEAVEN OPENED

ity. It has many divisions, corresponding to the spiritual rating of its occupants. One may enter it saved as through fire, another may have an abundant entrance; one may be near the door, another may be near the throne; one may be in the lowest room, another may be in the highest; but each one will find an appropriate spirit-home in which the order of life, rudely broken by death, will be resumed under better conditions and in which larger doors of possibility will be opened to him.

The belief in some system of grading meets many of our most pressing difficulties connected with those who pass out. Their characters are often very mixed, always very imperfect. All of them, even the best of them, will need further discipline and development. The path before them will be one of endless progress, for in the Father's spacious house there will be always room to grow.

The mystics peering into the hidden heart of things have caught a vision of a graded heaven, which they have represented as rising

A GRADED HEAVEN

tier upon tier ; or as a series of concentric circles, sphere within sphere.

Their favourite figure has been the Tabernacle with its Fore Court, its Holy Place and its Holy of Holies ; and they have emphasised the thought that while the tendency to advance will be of varying degrees there will always be accelerating movement. The poets have given the same interpretation. Browning will have nothing of "a joy that crystallises forever" ; Tennyson looks upon the chief reward of heaven as "the wages of going on" ; Lowell describes the manner of the soul's ascent as

"From lower to higher next,
Not to the top" ;

and this he says "is nature's rule" ; Dante, following the theology of his day, pictures the slow and painful passage of a soul from hell, through purgatory to heaven ; and shows its course, though hard, to be ever upward.

Underlying all these descriptions of the after life is the idea that death is not the end of the

HEAVEN OPENED

soul's existence, or of its progress. Eternal life is eternal growth. At no stage is it finished. All who leave these shores are imperfectly developed. They have still much to learn, much to attain. Their experience of God's redeeming grace is simply the seed from which deeper and better experiences are to grow. The law of increase is the law of the spiritual realm into which they have entered. As they fill well the lower place in the Father's house a higher place will be given them. As they keep moving upward they will be greeted with the call, "Come up higher."

Thus we see that to the life eternal belongs not merely the glory of going on, but also the glory of going on to perfection. The Christian is now experiencing immortality, but the process of unfolding has only begun; the earth-life is but the initial stage in an unending development; at the best he just gets ready to live when life comes to a close.

Goethe, when dying, prayed for more light; there are many who pray for more life.

A GRADED HEAVEN

“’Tis life of which our nerves are scant;
More life and fuller that we want.”

And this is what Death ever gives. It gives the more abundant life which Christ has promised; it gives ever-increasing life; it gives ever-improving forms of life; it unites “the power of an endless life” with the power of a progressive life; the power to move on with the power to move up. This is why to the growing soul death is gain; it is the resumption, under better conditions, of the rudely broken order of life; it is the opening of the door to larger possibilities. It is the ascent of the soul from one grade to another in a new life of spiritual development which knows no limit and which knows no end.

XV

A SOCIAL HEAVEN

*"Sae little noo we ken o' that blessed bonny
place.*

*We only ken it's Hame, where we shall see
His face;*

*It would surely be enough forever mair to be
In the glory of His presence in our ain coun-
tree."*

—MARY LEE DEMAREST.



THE Heaven of Jesus, the Heaven which He made known, the Heaven from which He came and to which He returned, is set forth as the dwelling place of God, the upper realm where is the throne of God from which the whole universe is ruled. It is presented in many aspects, but by unanimous assent the most attractive one is that which represents it as the Father's House—the final home of the blest.

In words which have proved the balm of con-

A SOCIAL HEAVEN

solation to sorrowing hearts through all the Christian centuries, Jesus exhorts, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." A more winsome and comforting conception of heaven than this has never been given to mortals. Nor is a better one conceivable.

These words reveal to us a social heaven. Jesus speaks of Heaven as His Father's house, and since His Father is our Father His Father's house is our Father's house, our souls' true centre and eternal home.

To speak of Heaven as home is to speak in the language of the heart. A home in which love reigns is a little heaven below. It is Heaven's highest earthly type. When friends of early days have passed on before and the heart's centre has been transferred from this side to the other side of the river, the aged pilgrim, blending into one the earthly type and the heavenly reality is often heard to say, "I

HEAVEN OPENED

am going home." Where else can he go to end his exile but to the heart's final goal? Only in the eternal home can his social nature which is here so often starved or blighted be satisfied to the full.

✓ Our social instincts are to be trusted. They are the deepest things in our nature. They are prophetic of the continuance of personal and affectional relations beyond the grave.

"We do not bury love;
Death emptieth the home but not the heart
That keeps its loved ones safe
Though out of sight."

The homing instinct that guides the carrier pigeon in its flight cannot be more unerring than that which guides the departing spirit as it takes its flight into the unknown. The in-born conviction that its flight is homeward is rooted in man's social nature. The Hebrews spoke of their dead as "gathered unto their fathers," or "gathered unto their people." They did not go into a land of strangers, but

A SOCIAL HEAVEN

passed on to join their kindred dead. Jesus enlarged this conception and made it vital by teaching that the dead in the first instance are not gathered to their fathers, but gathered to the Father. They come together in the Father's house; and are at home with one another because at home with Him.

Heaven has been revealed as a home to dispel love's greatest dread, which is separation from its objects. For what is home if not a place of fellowship and reunion? When the home centre is broken up, the family scatters. So long as it remains intact family reunions are possible, and these are the happiest events in our social life. When the widely-scattered members of a family gather under the parental roof-tree a foretaste of Heaven is enjoyed. But alas, how seldom are these family reunions complete! There is generally a vacant chair, a mute reminder that the ideal life is not here. But in the Father's house of the Boundless Beyond all shall meet; the fallen threads of the old life will be taken up; the heart will come to

HEAVEN OPENED

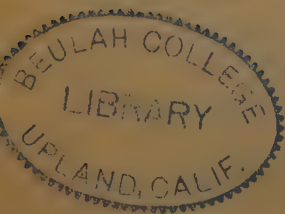
its own; and the eternal jubilee of a perfect social state will begin.

And just because the Heaven of Jesus is a homey place, suggestive of a highly developed social life in which the old home relations are re-established, those who are now running to and fro seeking to find some reassurance that what is deepest in their social instincts will sometime and somewhere be fully met, when once they know of it and believe in it, will seek no further.

And who can doubt that the One who has guided man through the whole of his earthly course will continue to guide him in the new and unknown country which he enters at death?

“For those I love in the Homeland
Are calling me away,
To the rest and peace of the Homeland,
And the life beyond decay.
For there's no death in the Homeland,
There's no sorrow above;
Christ bring us all to the Homeland
Of His eternal love.”

—H. R. HAWES.



XVI

A PREPARED PLACE

"Faith hears

The building of mansions for us in the spheres."

—CHARLOTTE G. MACINTYRE.

"They had prepared her crown in glory, and she could not stay away from the coronation."



WE have always come to a place prepared for us. It was so when we came into the world; it has been so all along the way; it will be so when we pass out into the unknown. Defining the object of his return to the Heaven from which He came, Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He knows the kind of place our spirits need; the place where they will be at home; the place where they can realize their highest blessedness; the place which can supply them with an adequate outlet for the unspent forces that lie concealed within them.

HEAVEN OPENED

When we go to Heaven we go to a place made ready for us. Our coming will have been looked for and longed for, and spoken about. When we enter our mansion in the Father's house we will enter into the light and warmth of a hospitality which has anticipated every possible want.

There are things which the Lord does directly, and there are others which He does through agencies which He selects. May it not be that in fitting up our mansions in the eternal home He acts through others? If so, what agency is He more likely to employ than that of the friends who have passed on before? They know our tastes. They may often have prepared for our coming when we were absent from home. With what delight will they enter into the work of preparation, giving the finishing touches to their work as the time approaches for us to enter our spirit-home, and waiting with glad expectancy to see our pleasure when we see how thoughtfully and how grandly they have prepared our celestial abode.

A PREPARED PLACE

The mansion set in order by the hands of our loved ones, under the direction of the Master, will be in harmony with what we are. It will be exactly suited to our conditions and needs. In this world, state and place are often at variance; there they will correspond. Here, a kingly soul may dwell in a hut, a mean and ignoble soul in a palace. There, all that will be changed and it will be possible to tell a soul's quality from its habitat.

The place provided for us above will thus be the place for which we have prepared ourselves below. If our hands have not built it, they at least furnish the material out of which it is built. This truth is set forth by Dr. Henry van Dyke in a parable which represents a wealthy man who prided himself on his carefully calculated benevolences which were done "to be seen of men." One night he dreamed that he was transported to the heavenly world, where he saw the mansions prepared for the followers of Jesus. He came to his own, and behold! it was a poor, mean, miserable hut.

HEAVEN OPENED

The angel told him that it was built out of the material furnished during his life time. To the question, "What is it that counts here?" the angel answered, "Only that which is done for the love of doing it; only those plans in which the welfare of others is the master thought; only those labours in which the sacrifice is greater than the reward; only those gifts in which the giver forgets himself."

Thus we see that a double process of preparation is constantly in progress; self-preparation down here, and preparation of ministrant spirits in the eternal home up yonder. In this way the life below is linked on to that above; and the final end of the educationary and disciplinary process through which we are now passing is seen to be the making of us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

When all is ready and the time for making the Great Adventure has come, we are not to fare forth alone; for in our ears ring the promise, "And if I go and prepare a place for you,

A PREPARED PLACE

I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Some have seen in these words an allusion to the text found in Numbers 10 : 33 : " And the ark of the Lord went before them to search out a resting place for them." This is what Jesus does for those who trust in Him and follow Him. He goes ahead to prepare a resting place for them. When Principal Cairns, the eminent Scotch divine, lay dying, he was heard to whisper, " You go first, I follow." The One he was addressing was doubtless the Elder Brother who comes to guide His brethren home.

Death is thus a method of His coming. It is the dropping of the veil that hides Him from us. It is the blessed apocalypse longed for in the lines of Tennyson,

" I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crost the bar."

Death does not bring Him nearer, for more near than now He cannot be. All that it does is to bring to our enraptured gaze the vision of

HEAVEN OPENED

His presence, as the one who has been ever with us, and who has now come to conduct us personally into the home that is awaiting us above.

Bryant, the poet of the natural man, says in his *Lines to a Waterfowl*,

“He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy
certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will guide my steps aright.”

XVII

A PLACE OF REUNION

*"Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know Him when we meet."*
—TENNYSON.

*"He is not dead—not dead,
But in the path we mortals tread
Got some few trifling steps ahead
And nearer to the end.
So that you, too, once past the bend
Shall meet again as face to face
The friend you fancy dead."*



THE early Church made much of the future reunion with the blessed dead. They looked upon their separation from them as only temporary, and hence they did not sorrow as those who have no hope. They felt that they were still united to them in spirit; they communed with them; they prayed for them; they triumphed in death in the hope of having them

HEAVEN OPENED

restored to them. They located their burying-places around the churches that the congregation of the living might recognise their union with the congregation of the dead. That they would meet them and know them again they never for a moment doubted.

To the hope of eternal reunion with the sainted dead, the heart persists in clinging. Carlyle held to this faith. The touching words of Lockhart were often upon his lips:

“ But ’tis an old belief
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief
Dead friends will meet once more.

“ That creed I fain would keep,
That hope I’ll not forego;
Eternal be the sleep,
Unless to waken so.”

Jesus assumes, rather than directly teaches, this doctrine. He makes Dives and Lazarus to know each other “on the other side.” He refers to the future life as a condition of fuller vision, completer knowledge. Who can doubt

A PLACE OF REUNION

that when the scales fall from our eyes, by a secret, subtle sense of discernment, soul will recognise soul, as the mother by her swift intuition discerns her long lost son in the bronzed and bearded stranger; and that we shall know one another in a closer and more intimate way than we did on the earth.

Of this consoling truth the poets are the truest interpreters. This from the *Roxburghe Ballads*:

“ Oh stanch thy bootlesse teares, thy weeping
is in vaine,
I am not lost for we in heaven shall one day
meet againe.”

This from Whittier on the death of his younger sister:

“ And when the sunset gates unbar,
Shall I not see thee waiting stand?
And white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand? ”

This from Newman, as the closing words of his immortal hymn, *Lead, Kindly Light*:

HEAVEN OPENED

“And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since and lost
awhile.”

This from Alice Cary:

“E’en for the dead I will not bend
My soul to grief—death cannot long
divide;
For is it not as if the rose had climbed
My garden wall, and bloomed on the
other side?”

This from J. L. Scott:

“When we go home, it must be so
From out the shades of the long ago
Will come the friends we lost below—
When we go home.”

This from Charles Lamb:

“My sprightly neighbour, gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,
Shall we not meet as heretofore,
Some summer morning?”

And this from Elizabeth Stuart Phelps:

A PLACE OF REUNION

“ And glance to glance, and hand to hand in
greeting,
The past with all its fears,
Its silence and its tears,
Its lonely yearning years,
Shall vanish at the moment of that meeting.”

The instinctive belief that we shall one day meet and recognise our friends who have passed into the land of silence is divinely wrought, and firmly grounded. In writing to Queen Victoria upon the death of Prince Albert, Tennyson said, “ Unless in the after life there is recognition of friends, our belief in God is a cheat and a delusion.” That God will meet to the full those deep yearnings which He has implanted within us may safely be assumed. The friends of the long ago are in His keeping; and when He gives them back to us purified and glorified, a holier love will be enkindled in which we shall be reunited forever.

During a temporary eclipse of faith, Charles Kingsley, the preacher-poet, dreamed of his dead son. “ Last night,” he writes, “ I saw him twice. He was strong and well. I kissed

HEAVEN OPENED

over him; I wept over him, and then I awoke to the everlasting, 'No.'” Is that the answer to our heart-aching human cry to Him who holds the infinities in His hand, and whom we call our heavenly Father? Nay, verily! When our vision is clarified we shall not wake to an everlasting “No,” but to an everlasting “Yes”; to the sweet assurance that our loved ones are in the Father’s hands where they are being safely kept for us to be given back as an eternal possession.

In this assurance Robert Browning found comfort, when, looking forward to his own last hour and thinking of the noble woman who had been his soul-mate through many happy, wedded years, he rapturously exclaimed:

“ On, thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee
again,
And with God be the rest.”

XVIII

AN ABIDING ABODE

"For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come."

—HEBREWS 13: 14.



T was for a long time the popular illusion that the visible world is an abiding reality; but this illusion is dispelled by modern science, which teaches that matter is mutable, and that its permanence is only seeming. We speak of the everlasting hills, but Tennyson reminds us that

"The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form and nothing stands;
They melt like mists, these solid lands,
Like clouds that shape themselves and go."

And Scripture foretells that all this cosmic order shall one day "be dissolved," and shall pass away like "the fabric of a vision," "nor leave a wrack behind."

HEAVEN OPENED

When this dissolution comes, the Christian believer, according to the promise, is to "look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," and that beyond a millenium on a renewed earth he is to look for an ideal which only heaven can supply; a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"; a higher order of existence than this one, from which sin and death are forever excluded; a land whose sun never sets, whose life never declines, and whose glory never fades. It is there, and not in any earthly paradise, that the hopes of humanity are to be realised. "The human spirit," says Dean Inge, "beats against the bars of time and space themselves, and could never be satisfied with any earthly Utopia. Our true home must be in some higher sphere of existence, out of reach of the inevitable catastrophe which the next glacial age must bring upon the human race." In whatever way the final change may come, whether by fire or by frost, it will introduce a new order of things. When the material world perishes

AN ABIDING ABODE

we shall find ourselves in the spiritual world; when the dream of life ends we shall awake in the world of reality; when our connection with this world comes to a close we shall find ourselves in our eternal spirit home.

The idea of permanence is strikingly brought out in the familiar words of Jesus, "In my Father's house are many mansions"; the word "mansions" meaning dwelling places or abiding places. These places in which earth's weary pilgrims find a fixed and final abode when their tent life is over, are not fixed and final in the sense that they are never to be outgrown and left, but simply in the sense that they are to be permanent and not transitory. They have been regarded by many as stations on the upward way, stages in an eternally progressive life. Those who enter them abide in them until they are prepared for something better; their progress through the ages will be marked by a succession of statelier mansions which their spirit-hands have built.

The quest for the abiding is eradicable. The

HEAVEN OPENED

city which earth's pilgrims seek stands for that which is stable and secure. And yet like all mundane things it is constantly changing. Rome has been called the Eternal City, but the present Rome stands upon the ruins of two former Romes. Surveying the so-called Eternal City the poet exclaims :

“ See the wild waste of all devouring years,
How Rome her own dead sepulcher appears,
With nodding arches, broken temples spread,
The very tombs now vanished like their dead.”

Cities, although the most enduring of human things, fail to give us sense of permanence. They die as men die; they are buried as men are buried. In a short time the city of our pride, “ through which the axis of the earth seems to stick out,” will be gone, not a vestige of it remaining. Knowing this, we look and long for the permanent. Within us is an unappeasable desire for something that will not slip away from us; something that will abide amid the slow decay from which nothing that is earthly can escape.

AN ABIDING ABODE

Abraham, a wandering sheik, "looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God," but he never found it here. Nor did those who followed him, lured on by the same hope. "These all died in faith," greeting the promise from afar, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and marched bravely forward sustained by the assurance that somewhere in the distance there lay prepared for them the city of their quest.

To John, in Patmos, was given a vision of the ideal city of our dreams, and though his words have been grossly materialised they still remain the most expressive form in which sanctified imagination has conceived of the future abode of the redeemed. He describes it as the new Jerusalem; that is, the old Jerusalem transfigured and glorified. It is heavenly and holy; from it have vanished the two evils which have vexed the minds and hearts of man, sickness and poverty. It is a city from which the curse of sin is lifted; a city from which everything hurtful or unclean is excluded; a city

HEAVEN OPENED

which is "the perfection of beauty," a city whose walls are Salvation and its gates Praise.

Is it any wonder that when the scenes of this passing life begin to recede and disappear from sight, dying souls through all the Christian ages have turned for comfort to this city of fulfilled hopes, in which the glories of God's kingdom culminate, and have longed for a home within its jasper walls? This homesickness for the abiding is a mark of heavenly birth.

"Wherefore we faint not ; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day, . . . while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

XIX

A SPHERE OF ENLARGED ACTIVITY

*"Are there no souls behind the veil
That need the help of guiding hand?
Weak hearts that cannot understand
Why earth's poor dreams of heaven must fail?"*

*"Are there no prison doors to ope,
No lambs to gather in the fold,
No treasure-house of new and old,
To meet each wish and crown each hope?"*

*"We know not; but if life be there
The outcome and the crown of this,
What else can make their perfect bliss
Than in the Master's work to share?"*

—E. H. PLUMPTRE.



O definite program of Heaven's activities has been given us. Much has been left for a sanctified imagination to supply. We must content ourselves with knowing the general direction things are to take, even if we have no very

HEAVEN OPENED

clear conception of the specific form of service that may be allotted to us. Of a few things we are certain; Heaven is not a place of idleness; the heavenly life is active, not passive; the same energies that are at work here are at work there, beyond the grave; the work assigned to any one will be the work for which he is specially prepared; the reward of faithful service will be promotion to a life of enlarged activity. But to be busy on the other side is not enough; one must be busy about right and worthy things.

Browning certainly misses the mark for once when he questions whether there will be any need for labour in the after life, as a means of discipline and development. He reasons thus:

“ When the child grows man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God;
And I have had trouble enough for one.”

Now, the uses of labour are never done. Of the grind and burden of some forms of earthly toil we may have more than enough, but the

ENLARGED ACTIVITY

need of labour of some kind can never be outgrown. In congenial labour, in beneficent activity, the soul's true well-being and joy must ever be found.

In describing the life on the other side, John says, "His servants shall serve him"; that is to say, those who have been God's servants here, shall continue to serve Him there; they shall there carry to completion the work which they began on earth. While they will find abundance of new work, their main task will be along the familiar lines, and will doubtless consist in instructing ignorant souls; in developing new-born souls; in comforting sorrowing souls; in healing bruised and broken souls; in short, in bringing into the perfect life those who have entered the kingdom of heaven in the weakness of childhood; those who have entered "halt and maimed"; and those who have been saved "so as by fire."

"The tasks, the joys of earth, the same in
heaven shall be,
Only the little brook has widened to a sea."

HEAVEN OPENED

The joy of the Lord into which they shall enter will be the joy of that larger service for which on earth they hungered.

A suggestion as to the form of service in the heavenly world is furnished by the reference to angels as "ministering spirits." Their true life and happiness is found in service, however humble it may be. A painting of Murillo's at the Louvre, in illustrating this, shows the interior of a convent kitchen, white and beautiful. Winged angels are doing the work. One serenely puts the kettle on the fire to boil; one is lifting up a pail of water with heavenly grace; and one is at the kitchen-dresser reaching for plates. All are busy, working with a will, and refining the work as they do it. So will it be with the redeemed from among men. Their true life will be found in the service of the King and the form which that service may take will be to them a matter of supreme indifference.

Plato had this fable: Spirits from the other world came back to this world to find a body

ENLARGED ACTIVITY

and a sphere of work. One spirit finds the body of a king, and does his work; another that of a philosopher, and does his work. After a time Ulysses comes and says, "Why are all the fine bodies taken and all the grand work done? There is nothing left for me." To this some one replies, "Ah, the best one has been left for you,—the body of a common man, doing a common task, for a common reward." With those who go to the other world, it is no doubt equally true that the highest honour may be found in doing the most commonplace work.

The work on the other side, whatever be its character, will be adapted to each one's special aptitudes and powers. It will be the work he can do best; the work that will give the fullest play to all that is within him. The energy stored up in his nature, instead of being withdrawn at death will rather be set free to work on in higher forms of service.

This throws some measure of relieving light upon the painful mystery of a life brought to

HEAVEN OPENED

a sudden close in the fulness of its power. In the presence of such a tragedy we instinctively ask, Why this waste? Is all the training, discipline, and culture of this choice spirit to be lost? It cannot be; for in God's universe nothing is ever lost. No preparation is ever in vain. There is need up there for clear heads, warm hearts, and skilled hands. When the art is learned, and the tools ready, appropriate work will be furnished. If some kinds of work are over, others will begin; if some duties are laid down, others will be taken up. And any regret for labour missed down here, will be swallowed up in the joyful anticipation of the higher service that awaits every prepared and willing worker in the upper kingdom of the Father, when

“The Master of all good workmen
Shall put us to work anew.”

XX

THE HEAVENLY LIFE A PATTERN FOR THE EARTHLY LIFE

"Heaven means a oneness with God."

—CONFUCIUS.



IN the Lord's Prayer we are taught to ask that the Father's will may be done, "as in heaven so on earth." To Jesus, the moral universe is one. Heaven and earth are bound together in spiritual bonds. They are under the same rule of life. The will of God is the standard of action in both. The earthly life is to be governed by heavenly laws. The example of Heaven is to be followed, and the heaven-life is to be lived on earth.

The common way of Jesus is to connect our human experience with Heaven by calling upon us to rise in thought from the earthly to the

HEAVEN OPENED

heavenly, and to discern in the earthly form a transcript of the heavenly reality. And this is the simpler way; for earthly things were designed to furnish the material out of which our conceptions of the unseen realm could be constructed. When the Son of God came down from Heaven to communicate to the children of men all that it was needful for them to know of the unseen realm, He had to make use of natural symbols which they could understand, that is to say, He had to compare heavenly things with earthly things, and not heavenly things with heavenly. Only by speaking in the language of earth could He be understood.

Here, however, the opposite method is followed. An appeal is made to the imagination and the heavenly life is taken as a model for the earthly life; just as the tabernacle of Moses was to be "a shadow of heavenly things," and was to be made according to the pattern showed to him in the mount. By making heaven an example for earth, a perfect ideal is suggested which must be intelligible or it would not have

THE HEAVENLY PATTERN

been made the object of contemplation, and must be realisable, or it would not have been held.

Angels are represented as supplying a high standard of action. We speak of a person of superlative excellence as a "perfect angel," "an angel without wings." And Jesus in instructing us to pray that the Father's will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven virtually instructs us to pray that we may become angelic in our lives. With no misgivings as to the possibility of reaching this end, Jeremy Taylor reminds us, "We who pray that God's will may be done in earth as it is in Heaven, must remember that the angels do whatever is commanded them, and go wherever they are sent, and refuse no circumstances; and if their employments be crossed by a higher decree, sit down in peace, and rejoice in the event."

But angels, while supplying a higher standard of action, do not supply the highest. That is supplied by the Son, who came down from Heaven for the very purpose of revealing the

HEAVEN OPENED

heavenly life unto the children of men. In Him the life of Heaven was reproduced in human terms. Therefore, if we enquire how they live in Heaven, the clearest answer is, that they live in Heaven as Jesus lived on earth. This is the value of His mediating life. It opens Heaven for us by showing us what the heaven-life is like. In his human life, so natural, so simple, so full of gentleness, of purity, of trustfulness in God, and of unselfish service for others, the life of Heaven was objectified. For Him to carry out the Father's will in all things, amidst these earthly limitations and obstacles, was to live the heavenly life before man. Hence for us to live on earth the life of Heaven, for us to reach the goal where "the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" is done freely, lovingly, joyfully, and constantly as it is done in Heaven, is to live like Jesus.

For us to live the heavenly life before men, as Jesus did, is to bring Heaven down into our hearts, and into the life of the world. Every-

THE HEAVENLY PATTERN

one that seeks to do the will of the Father knows something of what Heaven is like, and in some measure Heaven with him has already begun. A heaven on earth is ever found whenever and wherever the will of the Father is done as it is done in Heaven. Earth will become a copy of Heaven when characterised by its spirit of obedience to the Father's will. In any world, perfect obedience will bring perfect blessedness.

"The heavenly vision" which appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road was the vision of the heavenly Christ, in whom the life of Heaven was revealed to man. To that vision he was not disobedient. In taking it for his ideal he henceforth lived the heavenly life, as all who have been obedient to the same vision have ever done.

"My will, not thine, be done," changed Paradise into a desert;

"Thy will, not mine, be done," changed the desert back again into Paradise.

XXI

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

*"Set not your heart on dying
To find a world of bliss,
Lest for the future sighing,
You miss the joy of this.
But let your daily doing
Bespeak a heart within
Which thus its aim fulfilling
New life at last shall win."*



WITH a strange perversion of the Christian ideal, the religious teaching of the past represented life of the present as of no moment, declaring that

*"Nothing is worth a thought beneath
But how we may escape the death
That never, never dies;
How make our own election sure,
And when we fail on earth, secure
A mansion in the skies."*

From that false ideal which sprang up during

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

the Middle Ages, and continued down to a few generations ago, there has been a violent reaction. No longer are we in danger of substituting a visionary life in the future for the actual life of the present, or of shunning the world instead of improving it; or of making religion a preparation for heaven, instead of the practice of right living on earth. The danger is all on the other side. This world is too much with us; Heaven, too little. Instead of having to be reminded that godliness has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come, we have need to be reminded that it has the promise of the life to come, as well as of the life that now is. Over-worldliness, not other-worldliness is the besetting sin of the times. Tyndale in his day reproached the clergy because "they so crope into men's minds as to make them think of nothing but the building of great steeples like that of Tenterden while the adjoining harbours were neglected." It is not so today. The harbours have the first attention.

HEAVEN OPENED

This change of emphasis is a mark of healthy-mindedness. It indicates a triumph over the morbid desire to escape life's discipline, and a return from star-gazing to practical, good doing. At the same time, we make a great mistake if we leave out the consideration of the future life as one of the working forces for righteousness in the world. Out of the future life come some of the deepest motives for right living in the present. A faith that brings Heaven down to earth is working for a fairer social order. It has been well said, "Men do not think less of the housing of the poor because they think of the mansions of the blest"; nor are they necessarily less active in the duties of the present because they dream of the everlasting saints' rest. When it is said that "our citizenship is in heaven," we are not to conclude that it is in heaven only. When a friend quoted to Frederick D. Maurice the text, "The kingdom of heaven is within you," he at once replied, "And so is the kingdom of England." Our heavenly citizenship is as

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

much a present reality as our earthly citizenship. It is not enough to say that our citizenship will be in heaven after death. It is there now. A French philosopher said that he believed in hell because he had been there. Many believe in Heaven for the same reason. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They are in Heaven because Heaven is in them. They already live there, and all that can come to them in the future will be a clearer revelation of where they are.

Heavenly and earthly citizenship are therefore in no wise opposed to each other. Their interests and duties do not conflict, but are as free from jar or friction in their twofold movement around their heavenly and earthly centers as the planets in their courses. The best preparation for the heavenly citizenship is the faithful performance of the duties of earthly citizenship. Daniel Webster discerned the latter truth when he said, "Whatever makes a good Christian makes a good citizen"; and Woodrow Wilson, the former truth, when

HEAVEN OPENED

he said, "A Christian man has a citizenship in two worlds. It is because he has a citizenship in heaven that he is free to do what he will with his citizenship on earth."

The recognition of this double citizenship is therefore of the utmost importance. We are prone to think that because the life that now is, is pressing upon us so strongly, Heaven can wait. But as the enrolled citizens of the upper realm who have taken out their heavenly naturalization papers, we have duties towards it which cannot be put off. We ought to begin to conform to its laws, and to practice its ways. Our citizenship down here is a very temporary affair. We shall soon get our transfer, and our heavenly citizenship will therefore be the only one that is left. Until the transfer is given, we ought to live to show that Heaven is our true Fatherland, and this world only our temporary abode on the way thither.

XXII

LIVING THE ETERNAL LIFE IN THE TEMPORAL

*"Heaven is theirs who are trying to make a
heaven of this earth."*

*"Only he who is of God has part in eternity
in time."—SCHENKEL.*



THE practice of immortality is altogether wholesome. Goldwin Smith has said that he observed that when men have lost the belief in the immortality of their brothers they have stopped serving them.

The life beyond is represented by Jesus as being indissolubly united with the present world. The two worlds are not separate and apart, but they are the upper and lower hemispheres of a perfectly rounded whole. The future lives in the world of the present, "and in today, tomorrow already walks." The

HEAVEN OPENED

Christian lives the eternal life in the midst of time. The whole of his earthly life is eternalised; it opens into the eternal; it is possessed by the eternal; eternity is in his heart, and in every passing moment; he is as much in eternity as he ever can be. Having entered upon the eternal life here and now; having begun the practice of it, all that the future can possibly bring will simply be a continuation and enlargement of what is already possessed.

The familiar sentiment, "one world at a time," is regarded by many as the dictate of practical wisdom, one world at a time being considered as much as anyone can attend to. But that is not the Christian view, which is two worlds at a time. It was thus that Jesus lived. He was in Heaven even when He walked on earth. Of Him it was said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down out of heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

When a certain man was asked if he were on the way to Heaven, he replied, "I live

THE ETERNAL IN THE TEMPORAL

there." With him the heavenly life had already begun. To the vision of Paul, the place to which Christ has ascended is the very place in which Christians now live. He thanks God who hath "made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places." This is not the description of a future hope, but of a present experience. Christians are now sitting "in the heavenly places" with Christ; they are now experiencing the power of His resurrection; their lives are now partaking of the eternal; they are living "immortality today."

This dual relationship calls for a dual life. The duties to neither world are to be neglected. If it is easy to neglect our duties to the home down here while singing of "the home over there," it is just as easy to forget our relation to the home over there by being unduly absorbed in our duties to the home down here; if "it is easy to sun one's self in the light of Heaven, while neglecting the things that lie starved in the shadows of earth," it is just as

HEAVEN OPENED

easy to become oblivious to the things of Heaven. This danger is well described by Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress*, where he has Interpreter take Christiana and Mercy "apart, and has them first in a room where was a man that could look no way but downwards, with a muck-rake in his hand. There stood also one over his head with a celestial crown in his hand, and proffered to give him that crown for his muck-rake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks and dust of the floor. Then said Christiana, 'Oh, deliver me from this muck-rake.'"

No one has come to his own who is not heaven-crowned. He has received only the smaller part of the inheritance which rightfully belongs to him. The world in which he lives is a very small one. He is not seeing life whole, but is seeing merely the under side of it. No life is full-orbed whose aims are bounded by earth. No life has largeness of meaning that is not concerned with eternal things. The

THE ETERNAL IN THE TEMPORAL

abundant life is the eternal life. The ideal life has in it heavenly elements; its feet are planted firmly on the earth; its head touches Heaven.

“In the midst of the finite to be at one with the infinite, and in each passing moment to have eternal existence, that is the immortality of religion.”—SCHLEIERMACHER.

XXIII

HEAVEN'S CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC

*"Mine they are by an ownership
Nor time nor death can free;
For God hath given to love to keep
Its own eternally."*

—FREDERICK HOSMER.

*"Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through the cypress trees;
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned in hours of faith
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever Lord of Death
And love can never lose its own."*

—WHITTIER.

*"Only love to us be given,
Lord, we seek no other heaven."*

—CHARLES WESLEY.



FAMILIAR hymn expresses the sentiment: "Love is the golden chain that binds the happy souls above." Very different from this is the heaven of spiritualism. According to

ITS CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC

the reports which spiritualistic mediums are said to obtain from "the other side," everything goes on there much as it does here. There are to be found the same discords; the same petty jealousies and animosities, that are to be found down here. What of the place where such things exist? That cannot be Heaven. In the Heaven of Jesus all earth's discords are reduced to harmony; and in the reign of perfect love, perfect blessedness is realised. The Heaven of Jesus is the home of love. There love fills every heart, looks through every eye, shines in every face, and makes rich every life. Heaven and love are one.

A Greek legend runs thus: "When Ion is about to yield up his young existence as a sacrifice to fate, his beloved Clementia asks if they shall meet again? To which Ion replies, 'I asked that dreadful question in vain of the hills that seemed eternal; of the clear streams that flow forever, of the stars among whose fields of azure my spirit has walked; but as I look upon thy loving face I feel that there is

HEAVEN OPENED

something in thy love that cannot wholly perish. Clementia, we shall meet again!"

Yes, love is eternal. It is a spark from the eternal fire which can never go out. It does not say, "'Till death do us part," for it knows of no eternal separation. In the presence of the inevitable temporary separation we keep hugging to our hearts the conviction that love is imperishable, that by it souls are united in a deathless bond. We repel the thought that the treasures of the heart can be recalled and that death can take our loved ones from us forever. Although "no voice is heard, no sign is made,"

"Yet love will dream, and Faith will trust,
(Since He who knows our need is just,)
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must."

The logic of the heart is all-convincing. The affections cry out for an immortal life. The divinity that stirs within us, and points out an hereafter is love. Love, like life, persists through all outward changes. It can perish

ITS CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC

only in the destruction of being. If we live forever, we love forever. A dying mother, when asked what message she wished to send to her absent boy, said, "Tell him that I love him, and shall always love him." In her thought, the immortality of life and the immortality of love were inseparably intertwined.

On the marble cross erected over his wife's grave, Charles Kingsley had these words inscribed, "We have loved, we love, we shall love." After the death of his wife, Browning wrote in her New Testament the words of Dante, "Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, that from this life I shall pass to another better, where the lady lives of whom my soul was enamoured." "We are agreed," says John Fiske, "that the life beyond the grave would be a delusion and a cruel mockery without the continuance of the tender household affections which alone make the present life worth living." The poet Keats, beating down his doubts, and allowing his heart to speak, thus wrote to Fanny Browne: "I wish

HEAVEN OPENED

to believe in immortality—I wish to live with you forever.”

When our friends have passed over we feel that they are more than ever ours. They are more with us, and we with them; they are more to us, and we to them. Because they are now spirits in immortal bodies, and we are still spirits in mortal bodies, makes no difference between us. Our fellowship is in the spirit, and overleaps all barriers of space; and whatever changes they may have undergone we and they are essentially the same, and come together on the same old footing. The solid fact of present fellowship is the basis of the hope of future reunion. With those who possess it the conviction abides and grows that they love forever, and that “some day love shall claim his own.”

In his apostrophe to love, Paul says it never faileth. It never fails in the test applied to it, or in the demands made upon it. Whenever sacrifice is withheld it is because love is absent. Love is the one indestructible element in human

ITS CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC

life. "Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain."
To which words of Emerson may be added
those of Tennyson,

"Love is too precious to be lost,
A little grain shall not be spilt."

In the assurance that true love abides, that
there are friendships which are eternal; that
what the heart holds, it holds forever, the soul
in the loneliness of separation from the object
of its love has every reason to rest in hope.

"Ye mourning souls who humbly in dark-
ness and all alone
Sit missing a dear lost presence, and the
joy of a vanished day,
Be comforted with this message,—that our
own are forever our own,
And God who gave the vanished gift,
He takes it never away."

—SUSAN COOLIDGE.

XXIV

HEAVEN'S CHIEF ATTRACTION

*"When we pass o'er death's dark river,
We shall see Him as He is,
Resting in His love and favour,
Owning all the glory His."*



HEN Stephen, the first Christian martyr, stood before the Jewish Council charged with "speaking blasphemous words against Moses, and against God," his accusers "gnashed upon him with their teeth," ready to tear him in pieces like a pack of ravening wolves. In the midst of the uproar, he remained serene and unmoved, "his face as it had been the face of an angel." And, "being full of the Holy Spirit he looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man

ITS CHIEF ATTRACTION

standing on the right hand of God." What Stephen saw was the best sight which heaven affords—the sight which he needed most to give him comfort and strength in the hour of martyrdom. The significant thing is that he recognised Jesus when he saw Him, Christ evidently appearing to him in the same form in which he, Stephen, knew Him on earth. What he saw absorbed him so completely that he had room in his mind for naught else. Thus will it be with every Christian when faith is changed to sight.

The vision of Stephen was the direct revelation of unseen realities and not merely an inward impression made upon the mind, as when John Bunyan saw the Celestial City from Bedford jail. Not only were Heaven and Christ present to his inner consciousness, but objectively they were not far away. As he looked up from his turbulent murderers they were to him present and blessed realities.

It is the presence of Christ that constitutes Heaven, just as it is the king's presence that

HEAVEN OPENED

makes the court. To be with Christ and enter into abiding companionship with Him is to attain the final end of a life of faith. At the beginning of His Christian life, Paul expressed the hope that before he died, he would meet his Lord in some way palpable to the senses. Towards the close of his life his Messianic hope changed its form but not its substance, and he came to have a desire to be with Christ, which, he said, "was far better" than remaining in this scene of trial and conflict. To be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord, and to be present with the Lord is to be in Heaven, for Heaven is where Christ is. That this has become the prevailing conception of things, shows how the Spirit of God is leading us on from the outward to the spiritual, and from the temporal to the eternal.

A school-girl, when asked by her teacher, "Where is home?" replied, "Where mother is." She was right. It was scarcely necessary for Luther to declare, "I had rather be in hell with Christ, than be in heaven without him";

ITS CHIEF ATTRACTION

for, as some one has said, "Hell itself would be Heaven if Christ were in it; and Heaven would be hell if Christ were absent from it." Wherever we may go in God's boundless universe, into whatever distant world we may take our flight, we can never be separated from Him, and "anywhere with Jesus, will be home, sweet home."

A remarkable thing in connection with the disembodied spirits who are said to send communications from the unseen realm through spiritualistic mediums, is that with hardly an exception, they never speak of having seen Jesus. Their attitude regarding Him is unaccountable except on the ground that they are not in Heaven, but in some lower sphere; for since Jesus is Heaven's chief attraction they could not miss seeing and hearing about Him. If they were really in the place where Jesus is, their reports would be full of Him.

When a vision of the unseen realm came to John in the Isle of Patmos, the central figure in it was the radiant form of the glorified Re-

HEAVEN OPENED

deemer. Around Him everything revolved. The inscription which John gives to his book is *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. A heaven without Jesus would be like a world without a sun to lighten it; it would be no heaven at all. That His disciples would find their Heaven in His presence, Jesus plainly intimates in His parting declaration, "Where I am, there also shall my servant be"; and in His parting promise, "I will come again and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Any place, therefore, in which that promise is fulfilled, will be Heaven. This suggests to us the aching void which we find in *Psychical Research*. With all its searching it has failed to find Heaven's chief attraction: it presents to us a Christless Heaven.

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace;
Not on the crown He giveth,
But on His piercèd hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Emmanuel's land."

XXV

HEAVEN'S CHIEF JOY

*"Heaven's gate is shut to him who comes alone;
Save thou a soul and it shall save thy own."*



WE often wonder what things are of primal interest to our loved ones who have passed within the veil. Are they concerned mainly about our health, or our happiness, or our success in business? No; these are to them subordinate interests. What they are chiefly concerned about is our spiritual welfare. They want to know if we have turned to the Lord; if we have grown in grace; if we have kept our good name untarnished; if we have increased in usefulness to others. Especially do they want to know if their prayers have been answered in the repentance of those for whose eternal fellowship they can never cease to yearn. To

HEAVEN OPENED

them nothing is of such absorbing interest as the turning of a soul to God; for that means more than the building of a railway, the launching of a ship, or the founding of a city. It means the first step in the upward progress of an immortal being; the initial act in the development of a life that shall keep on unfolding as long as God endures.

This is the thought presented in the triad of parables contained in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel. As a shepherd rejoices over the recovery of his lost sheep, a woman over the recovery of her lost coin, a father over the recovery of his lost son, so God rejoices over the recovery of a lost sinner; and in His joy, all Heaven shares. There is said to be "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth"; "joy in the presence of the angels"; joy in the heart of God, and in the hearts of all the sainted dead. The repentance of a single soul sets all the bells of Heaven ringing. Were any to stand aloof and keep from joining in Heaven's universal jubilee, it would be a sign that he

ITS CHIEF JOY

did not belong there and that his proper place was the outer darkness.

When a soul is "lost," Heaven is concerned, and all the forces at its command are put in action to reclaim him; nor is the search after him ever relinquished until he is found and brought home. That the meanest soul that breathes possesses intrinsic value; that he is dear to the heart of God; that God will miss him and mourn him if his place is empty, supply the reasons why Heaven's effort on his behalf is unceasing, and why no sacrifice is spared to compass his redemption. The Cross, which is the highest expression of divine seeking, suffering, sacrificing love, is Heaven's estimate of the measure of man's worth as a child of the Eternal, and an heir of immortality. Into its mystery "angels desire to look." They know the relative value of things; they see things in a clearer light above the smoke of earth, and nothing is of greater interest to them than the wonders of the Cross which mortals slight.

HEAVEN OPENED

Redemption is a costly thing. To secure it the price of blood must always be paid. When Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost,

“None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
How dark was the night that the Lord
passed through,
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.”

And when the object of His search is attained,

“The angels echo around the throne,
‘Rejoice! for the Lord brings back His
own.’”

By making sympathy with Heaven over the recovery of the lost the chief evidence of a heavenly spirit, Christianity supplies a new religious test. Alas, how many professing Christians are strangers to this spirit! Were they transported to Heaven they would be out of harmony with its joy. They experience no thrill of delight when they hear of the triumphs of the Gospel. They stand aloof from the out-

ITS CHIEF JOY

casts, and have no joy in their recovery, and are reluctant to receive them into fellowship. When some ill-favoured person repents, and turns his feet into the heavenward way, they even grudge him the pardoning mercy of God. Like the Pharisees who murmured at that over which Heaven rejoices, they stand condemned as aliens to the spirit of Heaven.

This Pharisaical spirit, which is strikingly illustrated in the elder son, in whose heart brotherhood was dead, and who had no sympathy with the father in his joy when his son returned home, shuts the soul from the light and warmth of the glad home welcome, and leaves it in the outer darkness. And the bitter thing about it is that from that heavenly joy the unloving heart is self-excluded. The failure to show Christ's spirit to the sinful, the failure to receive sinners, not only keeps one from getting to Heaven when he dies, it keeps him from gaining a foretaste of its happiness here. And further: this cold and selfish spirit totally misrepresents the Lord; puts a barrier

HEAVEN OPENED

in the way of the penitent, keeping him from entering the kingdom.

Not until the Lord's people who are His representatives on earth, get rid of the Phari-saical spirit, and are ready to share in the joy of Heaven, here or anywhere, now or at any time, over the most degraded sinner that repenteth, not until the restoration of the lost is the chief ingredient in their glory, will they get the taste of what Heaven is like, and begin to know what awaits those who enter forever into the joy of their Lord.

“If selfishly Thy Heaven I seek,
I seek Thy Heaven in vain,
For Heaven is all unselfishness;
The souls whose home is there
Have never dreamed of happiness
They do not long to share.”

XXVI

TAKING THE FUTURE UPON TRUST

*"Peace, perfect peace; our future all unknown,
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne."*

—EDWARD BICKERSTETH.



THE main reason, doubtless, why God has given us so little definite, positive knowledge touching the future life is that we might take it upon trust. Even in this life we have to face a future that is all unknown, and go forward to meet it, walking in the way of faith, saying,

"I know not what will befall me! God hangs
a mist o'er my eyes;
And o'er each step of my onward path He
makes new scenes to rise;
And every joy He sends me comes as a
sweet and glad surprise.
So I go on, not knowing. I would not if I
might;

HEAVEN OPENED

I would rather walk in the dark with God
than go alone in the light.

I would rather walk with Him by faith than
walk alone by sight."

The Christian life begins with a great venture, and ends with a great adventure; it begins with casting one's self unreservedly upon God. Then at the close of a life of faith, the soul goes out into the unseen, fearing no evil, knowing that God is near. When Charles Frohman, the well known theatrical manager, was standing upon the deck of the *Lusitania*, as she sank into the waters of the Atlantic, he was heard to say, "Why fear death? Death is the most beautiful adventure in life."

To the same effect are the closing words in Dr. Lyman Abbott's *Reminiscences*: "I look forward to the Great Adventure which now cannot be far off, with awe but not with apprehension. I enjoy my work, my home, my friends, my life. I shall be sorry to part with them. But always I have stood in the bow

TAKING THE FUTURE UPON TRUST

looking forward with hopeful anticipation to the life before me. When the time comes for my embarkation and the ropes are cast off and I put out to sea, I think I shall still be standing in the bow and still looking forward with eager curiosity and glad hopefulness to the new world to which the unknown voyage will bring me."

The other world is an undiscovered country. What we know of it is largely inferential, and there is nothing left for us to do but to trust the unknown for the known. God will be the same loving Father there that He is here. We are sure of Heaven when we are sure of God. Our past experience should conserve our faith in the future; for we know that the One who has done "exceedingly abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think" will not disappoint the hope which He has kindled within our hearts, but will fill us with a glad surprise when we behold the greatness and the glory of the inheritance which He has reserved for us above. Those who, all through life, have

HEAVEN OPENED

experienced His shepherd care, out of that experience are able to look down through the future years and into the unseen realm that lies beyond the limit of life, and rejoicingly exclaim, "Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

To take the future life upon trust is to take God upon trust; for He holds it in His hands. It is God's nature that is the ultimate basis of faith. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." They will trust God in the dark as well as in the light, and stepping out upon a seeming void, they will find the rock beneath. The life beyond the grave will no doubt be very different in many respects from what we imagine it to be, but it is enough to know that that life is in the hands of the All-Father, whose love cannot fail, whose power cannot wane, whose wisdom cannot err, and who can be depended upon to provide for all His children the best possible

TAKING THE FUTURE UPON TRUST

place in all the universe that they are prepared to occupy.

“I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.”
—WHITTIER.

XXVII

LEAVING OUR BELOVED DEAD IN THE FATHER'S HANDS

*"Where men see only ruins, God sees
finished walls."*



NE of life's most painful experiences is realised when a beloved child has passed into the unseen without having given evidence of any heavenward inclination; or it may even be stained by some unshriven sin, or bound in the chains of some enslaving habit. The fate of such an one is the occasion of agonising solitudes. Here is an illustrative case: A young man who was the only son of a widowed mother was struck down in a drunken brawl. As life was swiftly passing he opened his eyes, and said in a broken whisper, "This seems to be death; if it is, all I have to say is that I have

OUR BELOVED DEAD

wickedly wasted my life. I have acted cruelly to my mother; and shabbily to my God. God pity my dear mother, and have mercy upon my poor soul!" With these words he closed his eyes in death.

His mother was inconsolable. She felt that God had failed her; that all the prayers and tears and labours of years had been in vain. The minister who conducted the funeral services uttered pious platitudes, but could not find a single word of hope with which to pierce the gloom of despair which was fast settling down upon the mother's heart. Prayer brought no relief. One day, when utterly disconsolate, she came across some words of George MacDonald, in *Robert Falconer*, where a mother bewailing the conduct of a wayward son rises in rebellion against the harsh and narrow teaching of her day, and passionately exclaims, "I canna say, 'Thy will be done.' But dinna lay it to my chairge; for gin ye were a mither yersel ye widna pit him there." The book fell from her hand, and a shout of grateful praise

HEAVEN OPENED

came from her lips, for the Heaven of God's heart had been opened to her by these daring words.

But here we are treading on dangerous ground for any analogy between human and divine relationships may easily be carried too far, yet the appeal from the humanly imperfect to the divinely perfect is surely a valid one. It is made by Laura E. Richards in the following parable: "Hell-gate clanged behind the youth, and those without stood and looked upon one another. First came his friend, and said to the Keeper of the gate, 'Let him out! He is young and his work still to do. Who knows but he may amend and do it yet?'" Next came his lover and clasped the bars, and wept upon them. 'Let him out,' she cried, 'we are too young to die, and without him I cannot live.' Last came his mother, for she had a long way to come. 'What is all this ado?' she said. 'Let me in to him,' and she broke the bars and entered." In this parable the depth of a mother's love is strikingly set forth. But can

OUR BELOVED DEAD

it possibly outstrip the love of God? No; a thousand times, No! Were all the mothers' hearts in all the world fused into one, that one heart would only be as an atom to the universe compared with the infinite heart of God, in whose great love every erring child is embraced. In the hands of such a God "the greatness of whose mercy reacheth unto the heavens," we ought to be able to leave our beloved dead, and calmly await the issue.

Speaking of himself in the hour of a great transgression, David exclaimed, "Let me not fall into the hands of men, but into the hands of God." Into the hands of the Eternal Father, our beloved dead have gone, and surely they could not be in a better place. He is not through with them, He has all the eternities in which to work, and if it has taken Him untold ages to make a piece of old red sandstone, how long will it take Him to perfect a human soul? Not until His purposes in their lives has been completed shall we be able to judge of it. But of this we can rest assured,

HEAVEN OPENED

that whatever the future may bring, it will bring no change in the redeeming purpose by which every life is encompassed. His mercy "endureth forever," and that is enough for us to know, enough for us to rest in, in view of life's dark mysteries, and the future's closely-guarded secrets.

"My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."
—BROWNING.

XXVIII

IN ETERNAL BONDS

*"Can the bonds that make us here
Know ourselves immortal
Drop away, like foliage sear,
At Life's inner portal?
What is holiest below
Must forever live and grow.*

*"He who on earthly path
Bids us help each other—
Who His well-beloved hath
Made our elder brother—
Will but clasp the chain of love
Closer when we meet above."*

—LUCY LARCOM.



ARTH'S relationships are given to teach us something higher. The belief that all that is spiritual in earth's relationships shall abide and come to full fruition, is well nigh universal. It is embedded in our nature, and is strongest in the best of men. 'There is an instinctive con-

HEAVEN OPENED

viction that the friendships of the spirit are not for time merely, but are extended to the other side, where all the dross that may have got mixed up in them is burned away and only the pure gold of holy unselfishness remains.

In all human love there are elements which are essentially transient; over there is a love which is essentially eternal. Whatever is rooted in the physical passes away, whatever is of the spirit abides. It was an important part of the mission of Christ to spiritualise the affections; to transfigure them with a glory that shall never dim, to endow them with the immortality which belongs to the spiritual and the divine. Touched by Him all human love is born anew, and enters the kingdom of the spirit which cannot be moved.

Here we find a principle which throws a flood of light upon the much misunderstood words of Jesus, that in the resurrection "they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels of God in heaven." The meaning of these words is evidently that no relationship

IN ETERNAL BONDS

upon the physical plane will be entered into in heaven. There is, however, no warrant for the conclusion that this sacred relationship will be destroyed; all that is implied is that it will be purified and ennobled, and lifted up to such a high plane that the earthly term, with its baser associations, will be altogether insufficient to describe it. True marriage is something more than a civil contract, a partnership of convenience, a legalised indulgence. Where it represents only these things it has in it no element of perpetuity, and can have no existence beyond the present. But that which underlies all true marriage, the union of souls, the ever-deepening communion of souls, abides. "The children of this age" marry in a conventional fashion only for earth, but "the children of the resurrection," who "marry in the Lord," are united forever. They are "as the angels,"—that is to say, they have reached that androgynous condition in which sex distinctions are transcended, or rather, in which the qualities of both sexes are blended together. This spir-

HEAVEN OPENED

itual nuptial of souls is described by Jacob Boehme as the perfection of being and of beauty of souls.

A hint of its significance is given in the lines of David Gilmour, the Scotch poet :

“ What new name hae they gi'en thee, love,
In that far-near countrie,
That nane can ken but them wha get?
O whisper it to me !

“ In the Near-far o' our young life
Thy name was changed to mine.
Oh, when I reach the far-near hame
May my new name be thine.”

Into this mystery we cannot pierce very deeply ; but resting in the gracious certainty that earth's relationships are prophetic of something higher, we may well be content to wait for the final and complete solution.

The instinct that this union of souls is not restricted to the world of senses is a true one and is to be safely trusted. The separation between those who are joined in one spirit can

IN ETERNAL BONDS

be only outward. The spiritual universe in which they live is one, and in its higher fellowship all boundary lines melt away, so that spirit with spirit can meet, "in mystic, sweet communion," however widely separated the bodies in which they dwell may be. Referring to this union between the living and the dead as one of the blessings of the Christian age, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that we "are now come to those who are enrolled in heaven as to the spirits of just men made perfect," that is to say, are come into fellowship with those who have passed within the veil, and are united to them in eternal bonds. Our fellowship with them is not interrupted by death, but lifted to a higher plane. It is not a thick veil of separation but a thin, shadowy soft veil.

"They are not dead ; they are away,
Stretching out arms to us,"

beckoning us on to higher things ; moving upon us, ministering to us, and helping us in life's

HEAVEN OPENED

struggle. This belief Harriet Beecher Stowe has voiced in the lines,

“ Sweet hearts around us throb and beat,
Sweet helping hands are stirred;
And palpitates the veil between
With breathings almost heard.”

In one of his later poems, Tennyson gives way to a momentary eclipse of faith, and sees no possible outcome of our existence other than that we should be

“ Swallowed up in a Vastness, lost in Silence,
Drowned in the depths of a measureless past ”;

but instantly recovering himself, he exclaims,

“ Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love
him forever,
The Dead are not dead but alive.”

Writing in *In Memoriam* of the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam, he strikes this certain note:

“ Far off thou art, but ever nigh,
I have thee still and I rejoice,
I prosper, circled by thy voice,
I shall not lose thee, though I die.”

IN ETERNAL BONDS

In this belief of spiritual intercommunion multitudes of Christians stand fast. They cannot believe that the incident of death can make any difference whatever between them and the departed. It is inconceivable that they should cease to think about them, and be interested in them after they are gone. And what more reasonable than that they should come to them even if they do not see them? It is said that Ian McLaren made a tryst with his mother on her death-bed, that they would meet together at a certain hour each day. This tryst he faithfully kept and he firmly believed that he was in touch with her all his life; and that her influence had been a great bulwark against temptation.

This is an experience which is much more common than many imagine. There are not a few who hold it as a sacred and deeply veiled secret, which they hardly tell to their bosom friends. They refuse to argue about it; they refuse to give up the comfort which it brings; and while they do not build upon it any fan-

HEAVEN OPENED

tastic theories concerning the realities of the unseen realm, they cherish an immovable conviction that their dead are near; that they can communicate with them, and that in some subtle way they can get the benefit of their superior wisdom in the perplexing problems that come up in their daily lives. They can imagine some loved one in the upper sphere urging them on to the practice of this communion.

And what is this communion with the departed but a widening of the circle within which spirits move? In the human sphere spirit meets with spirit; consciousness responds to consciousness; love answers to love; and in the upper sphere this is realised in a larger, fuller way. Those who have pushed ahead halt until the rear is brought up. Those who have won the victor's crown wait for those who are still in the thick of the battle; for it is the divine purpose that "apart from us they should not be made perfect." They cannot enter into the fulness of their inheritance until

IN ETERNAL BONDS

we join them, and we all pass into the inner glory together.

“ Speak to me still as you used to,
When I cannot make reply ;
Trust me through longest silence,
And be sure that by and by,
When the summer of heaven brings us
Heart to heart and face to face,
You will prove that I heard you always,
Though you seemed to talk to space.”
—CHARLOTTE FISKE BATES.

XXIX

ENTERING IN FOREVER

"Through the gates into the city."

—REVELATION 22: 14.

"And he shall no more go out."

—REVELATION 3: 12.



LIKE the Jewish pilgrims who climbed the hill of Zion singing songs of ascent, and entered the Holy City with everlasting joy upon their heads, so pilgrims on their heavenward way greet from afar the City of their dreams and hopes, and enter its gates with gladness to find within its walls the end of their long quest.

"The beauty of the eternal life," says one, "is that it is an eternal entering in." Rather should it be said that it is an eternal movement further and still further in. The passing

ENTERING IN FOREVER

through the gate into the light and cheer of the city is but a single step, but that is followed by eternal progress nearer and still nearer to the throne. Opening from the Roman Forum into the temple of Janus was an arched gateway forming the entrance into the city's hearth and home. In times of war it stood open wide to receive those who should return in triumph. Those who have the right to enter in through the gate into the City of God are those who "have overcome by the blood of the Lamb." Entrance into Heaven is not a matter of transportation, but of transformation; heirship is based upon sonship; change of place, upon change of character; a title to heaven, upon fitness for heaven. Because the redeemed have conquered through Christ's enabling power, they "are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple."

In the recently published life of Descartes, it is recorded that almost the last words of the great philosopher were, "My soul, thou hast long been left captive; the hour has now come

HEAVEN OPENED

for thee to quit thy prison; to leave the trammels of the body; suffer then this separation with joy and courage." With equal sublimity of thought the heathen philosopher, Seneca, exclaims, "The day thou fearest as the last is the birthday of eternity."

The gate of death is the gate of exit; the gate of Heaven is the gate of entrance; but these two are so close together that as the one shuts, the other opens. When a ripened saint was getting near the end of life's journey, his friends said "He is lying at the gate of death." He himself said, "I am lying at the gate of Heaven." Both were correct, for to the dying Christian the two gates are practically one.

Those who enter in, enter in forever, but they are under no restraint, for heaven is the home of the free. They are said to "go no more out." And why? Simply because they have no desire to go elsewhere. The tie that binds them to the new abode is love. They love it too well ever to leave it. Regarding one who lived long on the border-land between

ENTERING IN FOREVER

the two worlds of spirit and of sense, it is said that sometimes he hardly knew which side he was on, and that day he wandered a little further than usual, and enamoured of what he saw, did not return. His friends said that he was dead; he, himself, would have said that he had just begun to live. In this way the good God mercifully and tenderly leads the departing souls so that the glories of the heavenly world may not break upon their sight with startling effect, dazzling and bewildering them, but are revealed in a gradual way as they are able to bear them, in order that the transition may not be too sudden.

“ Joy! shipmate, joy!
Pleased, to my soul at death I cry,
Our life is closed—our life begins;
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last—she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore,
Joy, shipmate,—joy! ”

XXX

A NEW BEGINNING

*"I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes, and all our heart-aches
And all of our selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at
the door,
And never put on again."*



HEAVEN is not only a goal, it is a starting point, the close of one form of existence and the beginning of another. When the subject of the future life was being discussed by a group of literary men, a wise listener summed up the matter thus, "Well, you all seem to be agreed that we shall have a new beginning." And not only a new beginning but a better beginning under more favourable auspices. Here we are often heavily handicapped. In the Land

A NEW BEGINNING

of Beginning Again, all the disabilities under which we now labour shall be taken away forever. No longer will sin dog our steps; no longer will the sorely buffeted soul cry out, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it"; no longer will the throb of guilty desire rend the soul; no longer will dark temptations cast their baleful shadow across our path; no longer will "bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire" succeed each other; no longer will insurgent passions run riot within the heart; no longer will an alien world be permitted to harm; no longer will the serpent of slander stretch its slimy head across the threshold of the home; no longer will hate, deceit, revenge, or any other of hell's brood torment the soul in its upward strugglings.

Christ's Heaven is a place from which the unholy passions which made a hell on earth are banished forever; a place where the hurts which sin has made are healed; a place where there is freedom from earth-stains, escape from the bitter humiliations which come from the in-

HEAVEN OPENED

trusion of the fleshly life into the spiritual; a place where the curse of an evil heredity, by which the fountain-head of life is poisoned, has been lifted; a place where every hindrance to perfection arising out of the earthly environment, has been taken away. Those to whom heaven is such a place; those to whom it holds out such a great deliverance, may well exclaim:

“ It is not death to fling
 Aside this sinful dust
And rise on strong exalted wing
 To live among the just.”

When it is seen that this deliverance can come only through Death, we hail him as the great emancipator and as our leader into the promised land. It is by his friendly hand that we are led,

“ Out of the chill and shadow
 Into the thrill and the shine;
Out of the dearth and the famine
 Into the fulness divine;
Out of the sigh and the silence
 Into the deep swelling song;
Out of the exile and bondage
 Into the home-gathered throng! ”

A NEW BEGINNING

One of the soul's deepest longings is for deliverance from all that hampers spiritual progress. Full oft the bitter cry is heard,

“I would not live alway, thus fettered by sin,
Temptations without and corruption within.”

Rejoicing in the prospect of speedy emancipation, Paul likens his departure from these earthly scenes to the unloosening of a ship from its moorings, and the setting of it free to sail out into its native element. “The soul was made for heaven,” exclaims Beecher, “and the ship for the sea, and blessed be the day that gives to both its true element.”

The deliverance which death brings from pain, from weakness, and from temptation has a moral value. It was the opinion of Luther that original sin, meaning by that the proneness to sin, is annihilated at death. There is at least freedom from “the body of this death,” from which spring some of the most destructive sins. Paul, describing the antagonism that exists between the flesh and the spirit, de-

HEAVEN OPENED

clares that the two are "contrary the one to the other"; and that in the flesh "dwelleth no good thing." The physical man is of the earth, earthy, all his tendencies are earthward, but the spiritual man whom death sets free, passes forever "from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

"The spirits of just men made perfect" are the spirits of men who, when in the flesh, struggled hard as we do now, with the forces of evil; the spirits of men who were once encompassed by infirmity as we are now. But they have "won out," and we, rejoicing in their triumph, can say with Longfellow,

"Safe from temptation, safe from sin's
pollution,
They live whom we call dead."

The all-important thing in determining a man's future is the set of his soul, the prevailing tendency of his life. A Christian is one in whom the upward tendency has begun. He seeks the things which are above. He has an

A NEW BEGINNING

undying hatred of evil and a love of purity; the general tendency of his life is upward, and yet it is marred by many backslidings, many deflections from the right path. But when he gets to the other side there will be nothing to check this upward tendency, nothing to hinder his progress. His unfettered soul will mount up with wings as eagles, freed from all hatreds and jealousies, from all race prejudices, from all sectional narrowness, from all religious bigotry. With all that belongs to the old carnal self buried in the grave of the past, he will rise to heights undreamed of, and in fellowship with those from whom he was formerly separated, he will live upon a new plane.

Were it given to anyone to commence life over again under the same conditions as before, he would without doubt go on committing the same old blunders and failures, learning a few hard-won lessons in the school of experience. In this new life into which he is lifted up, there will be new possibilities of growth, new fountains of energy unsealed within the soul;

HEAVEN OPENED

powers which have long lain latent will be set loose. Washed in the baptismal waters of heavenly love, the heart will become pure and sweet like the heart of a little child. Grace will at length have her perfect work upon him, changing him "from glory to glory," until God's perfect plan is realised in his life, and as he bore the image of the earthly he shall now bear the image of the heavenly.

"I know by the cry of my soul within
There's a place where they shut the gates
of sin,
And the God of glory dwells."

XXXI

FULFILMENT

*"That which is best in life doth ever taste
As 'twere immortal food."*

—JOHN W. CHADWICK.



F the things we have written, this is the sum,—life is a struggle, death is deliverance, and Heaven is fulfilment. The relation of the life that now is to the heavenly life is that of seed-time to harvest. The germs of immortal life within the soul have little more than time to sprout. Reach their maturity under these wintry skies they cannot. At its best life is incomplete, it is always in the making, its ends are never fully realised.

Heaven will be the fulfilment of our noblest ideals. Imperfection now mars everything that we touch. Progress is painful and slow and

HEAVEN OPENED

we instinctively look forward to the end of our struggle in the home of perfected souls. We have an unshakable conviction that what we have attained is only an earnest of what we are yet to accomplish under more favourable auspices. The incompleteness of life's best purposes is a prophecy of something better.

“ This I know
That earth is not my sphere,
For I cannot so narrow me
But that I still exceed it.”

Amidst the imperfections of the present the world of completeness lures us on and never can we be satisfied until our feet enter its blessed portals.

Heaven will be the fulfilment of our deepest desires. Omar Khayyam, the Persian poet, speaks of heaven as “The vision of fulfilled desire.” It is more than a vision, it is its realisation. There is no dream of human good which it will fail to realise. Its employments and enjoyments will furnish all that the spirit of man can ever need for its highest develop-

FULFILMENT

ment through all the ages to come. What one has desired to be and striven to be, that will he become. The deepest desires of the heart cannot be limited to earth. Man is too big to be satisfied with the best that earth has to offer.

Heaven will be the fulfilment of our fondest hopes. We are saved by hope. Our expectation of better things sustains our sinking spirits. Were there no hope of relief from life's ills, no hope of attainment of life's ends, we would fall fainting by the wayside. With hope abiding within the heart when the night of waiting is long and dark, we can greet from afar the coming of the dawn. That these mighty, ennobling hopes which make us men are doomed to perish is inconceivable. That they shall be met to the full, our hearts assure us. In this belief, the Bible, which is a commentary on consciousness, confirms us. Upheld by our assurance, we confidently exclaim,

“Wilt thou not make, Eternal Source and
Goal,
In thy long years, life's broken circle
whole?”

HEAVEN OPENED

This the good God will do. He will allow no heaven-born hope to be put to shame, but will bring to realisation life's brightest visions.

Heaven will be the fulfilment of our immortal longings. As a place of discipline and training, earth answers well its end. But we can conceive of a better world,—a world where weakness is changed to strength; where trouble ends in peace; where agony ends in bliss; and every conflict is crowned with victory. For such a world toil-worn saints have ever yearned. James Gilmour, missionary to Mongolia, when his health was giving way, greeting the unseen with a cheer, made the following entry in his *Journal*: "Heaven is ahead, hurrah!" "Glory to God for everlasting life," exclaimed a consecrated cobbler as he sat mending shoes. With nothing short of the ideally perfect can the heart's deep longing be fully satisfied.

There are times when people think little of heavenly things; times when heaven is little more than a name to them; times when the

FULFILMENT

heavenly hope burns low, and the heavenly homesickness is unknown. But when loved ones pass within the veil, all this is changed, and heaven becomes a reality and an object of longing.

“As distant lands beyond the sea,
When friends go hence, draw nigh,
So heaven, when friends have hither gone,
Draws nearer from the sky.

“And as those lands the dearer grow
When friends are long away,
So heaven itself, through loved ones dead,
Grows dearer day by day.”

The Heaven into which our loved ones have gone bends very low, and draws us up to itself. Across the narrow boundary line that separates it from us we wistfully look, anticipating with joy the time when we shall pass over; and while we turn with renewed zeal to our tasks that await us here, life is never the same to us again. It is henceforth inseparably connected with the hereafter.

This hunger for heaven is something for

HEAVEN OPENED

which we have no reason to be ashamed. Often it is latent rather than active, and is not awakened until the soul has been weaned from earthly things through some great trial. Then immortal longings are born which nothing but Heaven itself can ever satisfy.

Heaven will be the fulfilment of the purpose of God in our lives. There is a loving purpose by which every life is compassed about. That purpose the God and Father of all men is ever seeking to accomplish, and He will not hesitate to upset our plans that His purpose may be carried out. Because God's purpose of grace in our lives is not yet fulfilled, we are often sorely troubled, sorely baffled. Could we only look beyond the boundary line of time we would see God's purpose ripening to fulfilment, for God cannot relinquish His parental responsibilities, nor can He abandon the good work which He has begun. His purpose being part of His essential self, He will pay any price to carry it through.

That the divine plan in human life has a

FULFILMENT

moral end is clearly set forth by Paul when he says that God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. We are often dissatisfied with God's discipline because of our failure to discern the moral meaning of life, but when once that moral meaning is seen, be it ever so dimly, we will be ready to exclaim with one of old, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."

If we could only see far enough we would see earth's failures changed into Heaven's triumphs, earth's discords changed into Heaven's harmonies. Give God time to carry out fully His purpose of redemption and all the clouds of our earth-life will melt away into the sunshine of heaven.

"So life must live, and soul must sail
The unseen over sense prevail
And all God's argosies come to shore,
Let ocean smile, or rage, or roar."
—D. A. WASSON.



3 6877 00051 9750

BT
846
.C3
1924

DATE DUE

JAN 26 '68		
NOV 25 '70		
FEB 21 '78		
MAR. 6 '79		
MAR 15 '79		
OCT 2 '80		
JUN 28 '90		
DE 4 '90		
GAYLORD		PRINTED IN U.S.A.

237.4

C188

H

Campbell J.M.

Heaven opened.

2565

